

**THE RELEVANCE OF CHRISTOPHER JOSEPH HERBERT WRIGHT'S  
CONCEPT OF *MISSIO DEI* TO CHRISTIAN MISSION IN BURKINA FASO**

by

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I declare that “*The relevance of Christopher Joseph Herbert Wright’s concept of Missio Dei to Christian Mission in Burkina Faso*” is my own work and I have indicated all sources that I have used or quoted by means of complete references.



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August 11, 2021

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Date

## **Dedication**

This work is dedicated:

To my God for the breath of life, love, grace, assistance, and protection.

To my thesis promotor, Prof. K. Mwambazambi, who supervised my thesis with love despite his different works, I am deeply grateful.

To my beloved spouse Folpoa Gnoula, and my children Aimé Yemboinni Lompo, Palamanaga Aurélie Lompo and Yenséli Jécolia Lompo,

To my father Tiantianda Lompo and mother Toumbenli Thiombiano for their encouragement and sacrifices.

To all best friends and my Christian family.

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I hereby certify that the information provided is correct to the best of my knowledge.

(Michel Lompo)

## ABSTRACT

The research demonstrates that many Catholic and Protestant theologians or missiologists have produced useful works on the concept *missio Dei*. Different approaches can be found according to each scholar and school of thought. Since the appearance of the concept in the Middle Ages, Christian movements (Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, etc.) continue to discuss it to the present. The concept *missio Dei* is an important tool in missiology. The researcher considers that nowadays, the concept *missio Dei* has a primordial place in the understanding of the Church mission. Hence, the concept needs a deeper analysis for a dynamic Christian mission in the evangelical context. It has been observed that evangelical churches are not actively engaged in the discussion around this crucial topic in missiology (Wiher 2014:12). However, Wright's (2006) observed that the debate on the concept remains open. Based on Wright's Biblical approach, my reflection and focus were on how *missio Dei* is seen by different scholars' and church leaders with emphasis on the new theory developed by Wright. In fact, the concept *missio Dei* emerged around the discussion on the origin of the mission and the missions (Zorn 2004:7), as the principal problem in the early theological debate on the concept. Its concern is whether mission belongs to the Church or to God. Another concern is to know if all the Scriptures talk about mission or only some references in the Bible do so, which constitute the foundation of mission. Consequently, the researcher points out the theological implications of Wright's thought for evangelical Christian mission in Burkina Faso. Additionally, it also seeks to contribute to the reflection for the development of Missiology as a discipline. Then, the thesis underlines the necessity of contextualisation of Christian mission and missional theology for good accomplishment of Christian mission everywhere.

## **KEY CONCEPTS**

Missio Dei; Church; Integral Mission; Scholars; Hermeneutic; Evangelism;  
God; Burkina Faso; Development.



## ABBREVIATIONS

E.C.M.F:	Evangelical Churches and Mission Federation
F.E.M.E:	<i>Fédération des Eglises et Missions Evangéliques</i>
AG:	Assemblies of God
n.d.:	no date
CMA:	Christian and Missionary Alliance
SIM:	Serving in Mission
AEHV:	Association of Evangelical Churches of Haute Volta
AEEBF	Association of Evangelical Churches of Burkina Faso
EE/SIM/BF:	Église Évangélique SIM au Burkina Faso
WEC:	Worldwide Evangelization Crusade
EEP:	Pentecostal Evangelical Church
AEP:	Pentecostal Evangelical Assembly
EMA:	Église de la Mission Apostolique
U.E.E.B:	Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches
AIMM:	Africa Inter Mennonite Mission
MAHV:	The Apostolic Mission of Haute Volta
CIM:	Conseil International des Missions
éd. :	Edition
et al :	<i>Et alii</i>
pp :	pages
sous dir :	Sous la direction de
vol:	Volume

NB : Les abréviations des références bibliques suivent celles de la Bible d'études version Semeur 2000.

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## CHAPTER 1: GENERAL INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Introduction

Missiology is a discipline of theology introduced in the XIXth century (Zorn 2004:27-28). Defined as the science of Christian mission, it contains many concepts which need a deep analysis to have a better understanding of their theological meaning. In this work, the main concept of the study is *missio Dei* (mission of God). Several scholars have produced useful works on the concept. Various approaches can be found according to each author and school of thought. Since the appearance of the concept in the Middle Ages, Christian movements (Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, etc.) continue to discuss it to the present. The concept *missio Dei* is an important instrument in missiology.

Despite Wright's (2006) efforts, it is observed that the debate on the concept remains open. Therefore, one finds a study of the concept through a missiological and an evangelical perspective useful, based on Wright's Biblical approach. In my reflection, focus will be on how *missio Dei* is seen by different authors with emphasis on the new theory found in the work of Wright. Consequently, the research points out the theological implications of Wright's thought for evangelical Christian mission in Burkina Faso. Additionally, it also seeks to contribute to the reflection for the development of Missiology as a discipline.

## 1.2 Statement of the problem

The concept *missio Dei* emerged around the discussion on the origin of the mission and the missions Zorn (2004:7), as the principal problem in the early theological debate on the concept. Its concern is whether mission belongs to the Church or to God. Another concern is to know if all the Scriptures talk about mission or only some references in the Bible do so, which constitute the foundation of mission. Wright, in his book *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, proposes his contribution in the discussion on the concept of *missio Dei*. Two major preoccupations are found in his reflection.

Firstly, one observes that nowadays, the concept *missio Dei* has a primordial place in the understanding of the Church mission. Hence, the concept needs a deeper analysis for a dynamic Christian mission in the evangelical context. It has been observed that evangelical churches are not actively engaged in the discussion around this crucial topic in missiology (Wiher 2014:12). The term “evangelical churches” means churches that stress the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ, personal conversion experiences, Scriptures as the sole basis for the faith, and active evangelism or the winning of personal commitments ([www.britannica.com](http://www.britannica.com)). In addition to this, Wright saw the significance of the subject and analysed it from an evangelical perspective with disinterestedness on the concept of *missio Dei* in its etymological meaning (Wright 2012:13). This disinterestedness reveals some gaps in Wright's approach that needs a deeper study. For me, there is a theological gap in the knowledge about the *missio Dei* concept to fill.

Secondly, if the concept *missio Dei* is known among the Christians in Burkina Faso, at least, it is neither well understood nor well implicated in Christian mission practice in the country. Christianity arrived in Burkina Faso a century ago with the Roman Catholic Church (Sandwide 1999:98). The centenary of the Evangelical church will be celebrated in 2021, for the Evangelical mission was introduced in Burkina Faso in 1921 by a missionary group (Tapsoba 1990). About a century later, there are still approximately 5 percent of Evangelic churches in Burkina Faso ([http://www.planete-burkina.com/religions\\_burkina](http://www.planete-burkina.com/religions_burkina)). The percentage is rather low and reveals a challenge in Burkina Faso's church mission. The lack of missiological analysis on the concept *missio Dei* can contribute to a wrong interpretation of Christian mission. Wiher (2014:12) claims that "the concept *missio Dei* has practically not been accepted by the Evangelical world in the French-speaking countries." The disinterestedness of the African theologians in French-speaking countries in the reflection of *missio Dei* is a proof that the church of Christ in Burkina Faso needs to know more on how to do mission. To achieve this, Christianity in Burkina Faso needs a missional hermeneutic in order to succeed in doing mission in the country. Wright's thoughts on the matter can help the Christian church in Burkina Faso in God's mission. To help resolve the problem addressed in my topic, several questions guided the study.

### **1.3 Research questions**

One main question and three secondary questions served as a compass in the research. The main question of the study is:

- a. What is the relevance of Wright's work on the notion of *missio Dei* to Christian mission in Burkina Faso?

With this central question there are subsidiaries questions:

- b. Why is there lack of interest in this concept promoted by Wright?
- c. What is the meaning of *missio Dei* according to Wright and what is missing in his theology?
- d. What is the Evangel church mission in Burkina Faso?
- e. How can Wright's approach serve as a more balanced base for an evangelical understanding of it?

#### **1.4 Relevance of the study**

Exact national statistics on religious affiliation are not available in Burkina Faso. The Government estimate say that 10 percent practices Roman Catholicism, and 5 percent are members of various Protestant denominations ([http://www.planete-burkina.com/religions\\_burkina.php](http://www.planete-burkina.com/religions_burkina.php)). There is deficiency in the evangelical church mission in Burkina Faso if we consider the eighteen million people estimate in the country. As indicated in this thesis topic, "The relevance of Christopher Joseph Herbert Wright's concept of *missio Dei* to Christian mission in Burkina Faso" the concept *missio Dei* will be the central key term. Nevertheless, this will not exclude the inclusion of other necessary terms in this reflection.

Firstly, the concept *missio Dei* is the Trinitarian's foundation of mission (Wiher 2014:12). We can say that the personnel of the trinity participated

together to the mission. By this, one can see that it is difficult to think mission as a church's program alone. Secondly, the mission of God (*missio Dei*) is a mission compass, for throughout the Bible we can see God in action for the salvation of human beings. We can hence affirm that mission is the Bible's principal subject (Wright 2012:14). Thirdly, for my investigation to succeed, particularly in Burkina Faso, it needs to master the missiological impact of *missio Dei* in the actual missiological debate in the church. Fourthly, we need to know the impact of *missio Dei* on the Biblical theology of mission for that is necessary. Fifthly, missiologist Hannes Wiher estimates that the evangelical theologians in French-speaking countries are silent on the concept *missio Dei* and its relationship with the church's mission (Wiher 2014:12). This gap in the *missio Dei* theology means that it becomes pertinent to join the debate in order to develop the Christian mission in Burkina Faso. Finally, according to Wiher (2014:12-14), the door is largely open for discussing this important concept.

### **1.5 Purpose of the study**

Obviously, this study cannot be undertaken without a precise purpose. Firstly, I intend to clearly present the focus of the debate on the concept. Secondly, I clearly present the understanding of Wright of the concept of *missio Dei*. Thirdly, the purpose of this study is to help the church in Burkina Faso to get involved in the promotion of the kingdom of God, because a church without a compass guiding her in her mission cannot reach her goal. An evangelical approach to palliate some theological gaps on the concept is proposed. I also encourage evangelical theologians, especially in French-speaking countries, to raise their

engagement in the discussion around the concept of *missio Dei*. Finally, it is hoped that many parts of the thesis will be published in the form of scientific articles and theological books.

### **1.6 Limitations of the study**

The concept *missio Dei* is a broad topic, which requires extensive investigation. Many works have been published on the concept. Nevertheless, I have chosen to study the concept essentially based on Wright's approach, developed in his book entitled: *The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*. Besides grounding my analysis on Wright's approach, the study also brings out the theological position on views of *missio Dei* by other authors such as Tennent (2010), Newbigin (1995), and Bosch (1992). Their positions will be used to better interpret Wright's position.

The research context is limited to the Christian mission in Burkina Faso as the field of the application of the findings of the thesis. In Burkina Faso, one can list four groups that claim to be Christian churches: The Roman Catholic Church, Evangelical churches, African Initiative churches (Independent Churches) and the sectarian churches. In this thesis, the target is "evangelical churches" with focus on the evangelical church's members of the (Evangelical Church and Mission Federation (E.C.M.F.) called *Fédération des Eglises et Missions Evangéliques* (F.E.M.E.) in Burkina Faso.

## 1.7 Current state of research

### 1.7.1 Literature review

I am not aware of any previous studies on how the *missio Dei* concept is developed in evangelical churches in Burkina Faso. Several descriptive studies were carried out that have proven helpful but did not put forward concrete solutions on the topic of this study. The necessity exists to browse through different scholars' prior research and works for opinion information linked to the current topic. As Nussbaumer (2014) poses a question, "Is there a misunderstanding about the notion of "mission"?" In the article, Nussbaumer found some confusion in Wright's approach on the concept *missio Dei* for the reader in his book *the mission of God*. His criticism of Wright's approach is useful for a better understanding of Wright's thought.

In Wright's book, Wall also found some weakness in Wright's conception on the mission, his articulation between old and new alliance, his proposition on missional hermeneutic and the theme of the kingdom of God in his book (Wall 2014:37). Wall's reflection is a guide for Wright's readers. He explains how to read and understand Wright's approach to missiology.

In his book *Bible et Mission*, Wiher demonstrates that *missio Dei* was destined only to the sending by the Trinity. Some years later, it becomes in Catholic theology *missiones ecclesiae* (the church's mission) (Wiher 2012:157). These realities in the theology of *missio Dei* became the missiological discussion center. From Wiher's contribution, I discuss the problem about the



agents of mission. That will help me to affirm if mission belongs to God or to the Church.

In his book, *(Invitation to World Mission. A Trinitarian Missiology for the twenty-first century)*, Tennent (2010) focused on the theology of the Trinity; and demonstrates that God the Father is the initiator and final purpose of *missio Dei*. He asserts that *missio Dei* is the central message of the Bible and the source of the missionary commission. Tennent's special feature is on the use of the Latin expression "*missio Dei*" in his reflection. His approach also constitutes a strong argument for us to notice the weaknesses of Wright's approach.

Laurent (2009), in his book: *Les pentecôtistes du Burkina Faso. Mariage, pouvoir et guérison*, develops the origin, the functioning and the missionary praxis in Burkina Faso of the Pentecostal churches, especially the Assembly of God, the largest evangelical denomination in the country. Without doubt, this book is helpful for my analysis on Christian mission in Burkina Faso.

Wright's (2006) book is a reference document in the field of contemporary evangelical missiology. His Biblical approach to the Scriptures is important for this research: "The relevance of Christopher Joseph Herbert Wright's concept of *missio Dei* to Christian mission in Burkina Faso".

Baur (2001) has done an important investigation, collecting data on Christianity in Africa. His work integrates the history of Christianity through all the generations, everywhere on the continent. On several occasions, he comes back on the church and mission history in Burkina Faso. It is hoped that his

ideas will promote better understanding of the challenge of the Christian mission in Burkina from the origin to the present.

Krabill (1996) writes about the Christian mission in Burkina Faso, narrating how Christianity came to Burkina Faso; how the church of Burkina Faso is doing mission; and the challenges faced by mission. With his contribution, I can analyse and criticize the strengths and weaknesses of Christian mission in Burkina Faso. I can also find how Wright's approach can help them in doing mission.

Bosch (1991) developed the crucial aspect of Christian mission. He demonstrates this by mission history and models, that Christian mission run the risk of survival. Therefore, his focus on *missio Dei* is of particular interest. After presenting the history, origin and the expansion of the concept, he places *missio Dei* as the cardinal mission from which all missions have their source. For him, *missio Dei* is above the simple conquest of soul (Bosch, 1992:528). His approach is built on the New Testament. In contrast, Wright built his reflection on the Old Testament. Thus, Bosch's reflection is important for us to critique Wright's approach in order to notice his weakness.

Though Flavien's (1990) book is about the first sixty years of the church in Burkina Faso, it shows us how the mission started in the country, the weaknesses of the first missionaries, and how this contributed to the challenge of the mission in Burkina Faso today. These proposed literature sources reassure that the problem of the current study has quality resources for its resolution. There are still many other materials on the *missio Dei* concept. But

no literature on the relevance of *missio Dei* to Christian mission in Burkina Faso, based on Wright's thought. Closure of this gap makes the present study original.

### **1.7.2 Sources of information**

The main sources of information used in the research are books, articles related to the research topic, scientific research documentation, both printed and information available on the internet. According to Mouton (2001:88), the consultation of books, monographs, conference proceedings, articles and all papers related to scientific research is important in any study.

The second source of information will be interviews. As I am going to work on the church's mission in Burkina Faso, bearing in mind the scarcity of books for all the research needs, interviews play their part to gather data to address the problem of Christian mission in Burkina Faso. The leaders of FEME, the Evangelical Churches and Missions Federation in Burkina Faso will be interviewed and other personalities as well.

### **1.8 Theoretical Framework**

This section provides a comprehensive theoretical framework used in this study. The theological discussion of those who advocate a "biblical foundation for the mission" leads me to examine Wright's approach on *missio Dei* following his "missional hermeneutic" theory. From interviews within the evangelical church in Burkina Faso, the study sought to understand how this theory is used in Christian mission in Burkina Faso. From Bible study, it is evident that the

Scripture shows details about the mission of God. In addition to a missional hermeneutic, the Bible is talking principally about the glory of God through His people's adoration, the kingdom of God and the coming of the Messiah. In the current topic, trinity, hermeneutic, missional, adoration, messiah, kingdom of God are the themes are developed.

The discussion of *missio Dei* and *mission ecclesia* determines the centre of mission. The concept of "Trinity" is key to attaining a positive solution on this study. A hermeneutic perspective guides on how to interpret the Bible. Then, the Bible can be read from a missional, messianic, kingdom and adoration perspective. Missional hermeneutic theory, as posited by Wright and other authors, forms the theoretical framework for this study. All data collected in books, by interview or by other sources on the different concepts of this study were analysed guided by this theoretical framework.

### **1.8.1 Research Design**

In the missiological perspective, "missional hermeneutic" is the theoretical framework used as an analytic tool to establish if the Church in Burkina Faso is doing mission according to the Bible perspective. It is a concern to determine whether they are doing mission based on isolated verses in the Bible, or they consider the entire Bible as a missionary book.

The research design in this study is to use the "praxis cycle" presented by Kritzinger and Saayman (2011:4-6) as an analytic instrument in order to evaluate the methods and practices of Christian mission in Burkina Faso. The

purpose for this research design is to illuminate a transforming mission at dawn of the twenty first century. The design is part of the research methodology, which is discussed in more detail below.

### **1.8.2 Research methodology**

Analytical methods are operational and effective tools for researchers. For good, reliable, and interesting results, they must use them (N'da 2007:113). According to Mathieu Guidere, cited in N'da: “every discipline, every area of research has theories and experienced methods. It is up to the student researcher to know them and estimate their basis and postulates before engaging his own research [...]” (N'da, 2007:113). In this study, several methods are used to develop my ideas. After data collection from books, internet, interviews, and personal experience, the data are submitted to analysis and critical methods.

Firstly, the historical analysis method is used, and it helps to situate the concept of *missio Dei* in its historical context. Secondly, using the theological critic method, it splits the work of Wright, *the mission of God*, into its essential elements, in order to discover their relationship and give their plan (Josette 1985:49). In this analytical method, the deductive approach in some part of the work is incorporated. Using the critical method, the study criticizes theologically the value, the quality (force) and the weakness of Wright's approach to the concept *missio Dei*. Finally, the biographical and the interview methods are used. Since the study is based on the Evangelical Church in Burkina Faso, group and individual interviews are used. These interviews help in the collection

of data not found in books as Mouton (2001:81) affirms: “interview [...] is one of the sources” most necessary, because it “provides additional information to research”. Biographical method is necessary because the topic is based on the thought of an author. Biographical method involves his works (published books, articles, contributions in other books, conference papers, lecturing notes, etc.

### **1.9 Ethical consideration**

This research is a personal product. It cannot be done by another person and cannot admit plagiarism in all its forms. Therefore, the research is original, and avoids plagiarism. All sources used are duly acknowledged, as well as following the UNISA ethical requirements.

### **1.10 Overview of following chapters**

This study is divided into six chapters. The first chapter introduces the thesis for a better understanding of the researcher and scholars’ viewpoints on the concept of *misio Dei* and describes different parties which compose the thesis. The second chapter retraces the brief history of the Christian Church in Burkina Faso and examines its relationship with mission. The third chapter deals with the concept *missio Dei* according to Wright. The fourth chapter provides missiologically relevant tools for Christian mission in Burkina Faso. The fifth deals with the missiological implications of Wright’s theory in the Church of Burkina Faso. The Chapter 6 concludes the study.

## 1.2 Wright's biography and work

### 1.2.1 Childhood and education

Wright was born in 1947 at Belfast in Northern Ireland (AMAZON, (n.d.) « Christopher J. H. Wright ». (<http://www.amazon.com/Christopher-J.-H.-Wright/e/B001H6QNY8>)). When he was born, his parents who were Christians, were serving as missionaries in Latin America, precisely in Brazil. Their missionary mandate ended after the Second World War. The two events (missionary mandate end and Wright's birth) took place in the same year. His father's name was Joseph Coulter Wright, and his mother's name Mary Christie Wright. His parents had four children, a daughter and three sons. The daughter was the eldest and was born in 1935. The second was born in 1938, the third one in 1943 and Wright, the youngest, in 1947. Wright (Interview 2015). Wright grew up in the town of Belfast and was educated as an Irish Presbyterian. Since 1960, Wright attended a classic school at Cambridge. He started his theological studies early, at 23 and graduated with a PhD in theology, Old Testament option. His specialisation focused on theology and ethics in the Old Testament, precisely on economic ethics (country laws, property, family, slavery, etc.) at Cambridge University in 1977. The title of his thesis was: *Family, Country, and Property in the Old Israel: Social Ethics in Old Testament Aspect*. It was published by Eerdmans and Paternoster in 1990 with the title: *God's People in God's Land*, Wright (Interview 2015).

### **1.2.2 Professional career and family life**

Wright started his professional career as a teacher at Grosvenor High School in Belfast. In 1977, he was ordained in the Anglican Church of England and served as an assistant pastor in the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul, Tonbridge, Kent (Southern East region), England. (WIKIPEDIA, « Christopher J. H. Wright » ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher\\_J.\\_H.\\_Wright](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_J._H._Wright))).

In 1983, Wright went to India for a five-year mission as teacher at Union Biblical Seminary in the town of Pune. At the end of his missionary mandate in India, Wright returned to Great Britain where he first worked as academic director at All Nations Christian College, an international transcultural mission training center. Secondly, he became Dean in the same institute from 1993 to 2001. Wright is currently International Ministries Director at Langham Partnership International and Teamwork coordinator for the Lausanne Movement (Wiher 2012:350). Wright and his spouse are staff members of All Souls Church, Langham Place, London. Wright grants, through this ministry, literature, scholarship and trains pastors around the Third World by symposiums on preaching for their pastoral ministry ([https://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/author.pl/author\\_id=343](https://www.ivpress.com/cgi-ivpress/author.pl/author_id=343)). He also exercised other ministry and consecrated about three months each year for the continuity of this project ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher\\_J.\\_H.\\_Wright](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christopher_J._H._Wright))).

Wright is a British national married to Liz. They have lived in Belfast before, Northern Ireland, part of the United Kingdom. They have four children: two daughters and two sons. The youngest child is 35 years old today and the



three others are 40 years and above. They are all married. Wright and Liz have nine grandchildren. The couple presently lives in London and are still at the service of the Lord and His Church in the world.

### **1.2.3 Christopher Wright Works**

Wright is author of several theological books and biblical commentaries. He has a passion to reveal Old Testament relevance in Christian mission. Most of his books are consecrated to Old Testament theology. All of his books are primarily published in English but due to their importance, some books have been translated and published into other languages, like French. His books and commentary are:

*Proverbs to Isaiah 39*, 1983; *An Eye for an Eye: The Place of Old Testament Ethics Today*, 1983;

*User's Guide to the Bible*, 1984; *Living as the People of God: Relevance of Old Testament Ethics*, 1984;

*Knowing Jesus through the Old Testament*, HarperCollins, 1990; *God's People in God's Land: Family, Land and Property in the Old Testament*, 1990;

*What's So Unique about Jesus?* 1990; *Tested by Fire: Daniel 1-6 - Solid Faith in Today's World*, 1993;

*Deuteronomy*, 1994; *Walking in the Ways of the Lord: The Ethical Authority of the Old Testament*, Downers Grove: IVP, 1995;

*Jesus for Today*, 1996; *Ambassadors to the World: Declaring God's Love*, 1998; *The Message of Ezekiel: A New Heart and a New Spirit*, 2001;

*Religion for Today: Teacher Resource File Bk*, 2002;

*Uniqueness of Jesus*, 2002;

*Living as the People of God and An Eye for an Eye*, Downers Grove: IVP, 2004;

*Truth with a Mission: Reading Scripture Missiologically*, 2005;

*The Mission of God: Unlocking the Bible's Grand Narrative*, Downers Grove IL, InterVarsity Press, 2006;

*Life through God's Word: Psalm 119*, 2006;

*Knowing the Holy Spirit through the Old Testament*, Oxford: Monarch Press; Downers Grove: IVP, 2006;

*Knowing God the Father through the Old Testament*, Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2007;

*Salvation Belong to Our God: Celebrating the Bible's Central Story*, 2008;

*The God I don't Understand. Reflection on Tough Questions of faith*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008;

*The Mission of God's People: A Biblical Theology of the Church's Mission*, Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2010;

*Mary Jones and Her Bible: An Adventure Book*, 2011;

*The Message of Jeremiah*, 2014;

*Message of Jeremiah: Grace in the End*, 2014 (AMAZON, « Christopher J. H. Wright »).

### 1.3 Definition of the key concepts used in the research

#### 1.3.1 Missio Dei

To come to a complete definition of the concept *missio Dei*, the word “mission” is a mean guide for the study to reach its goal. Indeed, it is the notion of mission, linked to the person of God who seems to cause more problems. This work explains the problem in each step as it is necessary. The term “mission” is from “*missio*” (sending) in Latin language (Wiher 2008:7). The word “sending” correspondence in Greek is « *avpo, stolh* » (*apostolè*); and « *avpo, stoloj* » (*apostolos*) (Rm 1:1; 1 Co 1:1; etc.) the appropriate word for the missionary or the messenger. In Hebrew, we have « *a'l.m;* » (*Mal'ah*) (Jg 2. 1; 2. 4; Pr 13. 17) or (*shaliah*) to design the Messenger (Wiher, 2008: 7). The verb used for mission is “to send”. In Latin “*mitto*”, in Greek: “*avposte, llw*” (*apostello*) (Mt 13:41; Mark 8:26; Acts 5:21; 1 Cor 1:17); or “*pe, mpw*” (*pempo*) (Mt 2:8; Mark 5:12; John 1:22; Acts 10:5; Phil 4:6; 1 Pet 2:14; Rev. 1:11) and in Hebrew: “*xl;v*” (*shalah*) (Gen 43:4; Ex 4:13; etc.). The biblical authors demonstrate that the notion “to be sent” is not limited only to human actors. It can be also used for angels (Numb 20:16; Luke 1:26), to the persons of the Trinity, as Jesus Christ (John 8:18) and the Holy Spirit (John 14:26).

The Latin word “*Dei*” is simply “God” in English. The combination of the two Latin terms forms the concept *missio Dei*, which literally means, “the sending of God” (Wiher 2012: 157). This definition is centred uniquely on the comprehension of this key concept. Indeed, the comprehension of *missio Dei* has known a divergence processes in history. The concept is divided into two

stages: the classic understanding and the contemporary understanding of *missio Dei*. In the following lines, these different interpretations of the concept are presented.

### **1.3.2 Understand the concept *missio Dei* through the word “Mission”**

In the theological field, the word “mission” precedes the concept *missio Dei*. A complete history of the concept *missio Dei* must then include the time of the term “mission”. This means that in the past, when the concept *missio Dei* was not known, only the term “mission” was in use. This section presents the evolution of the word “mission” in connection with the concept “*missio Dei*”.

#### **1.3.2.1 Classic understanding of mission**

In fact, different definitions of *missio Dei* according to different scholars are important for this study. From the time some theologians started to reflect on the *missio Dei* concept, classic understanding, primarily, referred to the sending of “divine processions” (Zorn 2004:7) before it was used in the context of the church mission (Rakoto 2013:12). In the past century, the concept carried various meaning, because of the progression of the understanding of the mission in history.

At a moment in church history, the understanding of the concept “mission” was in the soteriological perspective. Thus, the purpose of the mission was to save humanity from the eternal damnation. Later, the understanding of mission was known as the West cultural movement towards most countries (Bosch

1992:525). In East and the South, the church understood mission as an importation of Western culture, a strange culture that seemed to propose them a better way to live in society (Bosch 1992:525). They could not understand it as an unselfish religious activity. Sometime later, people understood that mission was the ways by which, a church or a denomination could stretch in the world. This understanding responds to the “ecclesial categories” characteristics (Bosch 1992:525). Even more so, mission was understood in “historical salvation” or eschatological terms in which it is waiting for the world transformation into a near or distant future of the kingdom of God (Bosch 1992:525). In Catholicism, the mission was perceived as a function and a structure of the church (Wiher 2012:180). From that moment, the mission took an “ecclesiocentric” model (Wiher 2012:180). The Protestantism movement has, however, considered the “triple autonomy” as a fundamental principal of mission (Wiher 2012:180). Bowen (2007:63) underlines that in the past century, theologians thought about the priority in mission. Many approaches were born. He points out that:

For the past one hundred years, theologians have argued about the chief priority of mission. Some theologians have said that the priority is to evangelize; others have said that it is to show love to our neighbors; others, to worship; others, to find out what God is already doing in the world and to work with Him in those ways. Some have said that the Church as a whole should be involved in both evangelism and social action (Bowen 2007:63-64).

Bowen (2007:63) has already displayed his position on the definition of the term “mission”. He asserts that the word “mission” describes what God looks like and also what the Church looks like, in which His life is reproduced. The above insights are not enough for a better understanding of the concept

*missio Dei*. Practically, the concept was not considered in its original and biblical meaning for the mission. It was either neglected or misunderstood in church history. However, there is an interest in the subject today and that brings new understanding on mission.

#### **1.3.2.2 Contemporary understanding of mission**

Mission understanding developed progressively until today and nowadays, it is observed that Christian movements accept the concept *missio Dei* in their theological reflection (Ducker, 2014). According to contemporary understanding of mission, DeArmond's conception considers the Latin term. According to him, God is the initiator, the assistant and the provider for missions. Thus, missions are not an activity to do for the Lord, but a work to do with the Lord".

Ducker (2008) makes a useful synthesis of the debate in an unpublished article and his synthesis can serve as a basis for the next step of this reflection. In that synthesis, five approaches which define the concept *missio Dei* are mentioned. Pachuau cited by Corrie, affirms that "Mission is wherever God is at work fulfilling his missionary purposes" (Corrie 2007:234). According to Engelsviken (2003: 484), "*missio Dei* "has been used by missiology... as a comprehensive concept that includes almost everything the church is supposed to do, or, even more, what God is doing..." Ducker (2008:1) thinks that these two definitions are tautological. For Bosch (1991:10), *missio Dei* means God's self-revelation as father and creator, who loves his people. Steffen and Douglas define *missio Dei* as "the idea of God's nature and expression extended to and

stamped upon the world. God the Father sends God the Son who sends God the Holy Spirit; all three send the Church” (Tom 2008:32). Progressively, Ducker stretches to the comprehension of Richebächer on the notion of *missio Dei*. Ducker takes inspiration from Richebächer and demonstrates the Trinitarian vocation in mission. Richebächer pleads “for a more precise formulation based on the original meaning and function, viz. that of *missio Dei Triunius* (Richebächer 2003b:599).

There will always be a debate on the concept definition of *missio Dei* in the different branches of Christian movement. Nevertheless, it seems that we have enough information to build a solid base for a definition resulted by the contemporary debates (Kalemba & Basua 2020). Ducker’s approach gives four elements. Firstly, he found that the “the original impetus of mission comes from God Himself. This makes mission a theocentric process rather than an ecclesiocentric one”. Secondly, he considers that “the missionary impulse stems from and reflects God’s intrinsic nature”. Thirdly, he found that “this nature is Triune, and each element of the Trinity is missional”. Fourthly, he affirms that “other agents (the Church, individuals, and organizations) may have the privilege of participating in the *missio Dei*, but they are participants and not initiators” (Ducker 2008:1).

These definitions can be summarized into two crucial levels. The first one considers the position of the church as “a privileged position and special relationship within the *missio Dei*”. The Second one supports that “God’s missionary purposes are specifically salvific”. Ducker declares that “It is at these

two points that theologians tend to diverge” (Ducker 2008:1). It is a definition of the *missio Dei* concept that understands the mission of God and the mission of the Church as distinct but inseparable.

The *missio Dei* concept and the Trinity are undeniably linked, and the mission cannot any more be thinking independently to the *missio Dei* concept. It became the foundation of mission understanding in all the Christians movements. In this purpose, Wiher (2012:158) affirms that “today, we are talking about a consensus base between missiologists, Catholics, Protestants, Evangelicals in order to consider the concept of “mission of God” (*missio Dei*) as foundation of a theological definition of the mission” It is concluded that the mission from now on, is to be understood from the concept of *missio Dei*.

### **1.3.3 Missional**

The neologism “missional”, “is simply an adjective establishing relation with mission, or calling the qualities, the attribute or the dynamic of the mission. “Missional” has the same relation to the word “mission” as “aliancial” to “alliance”, or “constitutional” to “constitution” (Wright 2012:13).

Wright defines missiology as the science of the mission. Then, he demonstrates that the use of the word “missional” would be more useful and appropriate than the words “missionary” or “missiological” in his approach to the mission (Wright, 2012:16).

### **1.3.4 Hermeneutics**



#### 1.3.4.1 Definition of the word “hermeneutics”

The word hermeneutics is from the Greek name of the god Mercure: Hermes, the gods' messenger to human being. It is derived from the Greek verb *hermeneuô*, which means translate, interpret, or explain. Paul was named Hermes in Acts 14:8-18. It is not a new word in theology. It was used in Greek in translation. The Greek authors of the Bible used the same word, when they wanted to explain to their readers a Hebrew or an Aramean word Mt 1:23; Mark 5:41; John 9:7; Acts 4:36; 9:36; Luke 24:27; Mark 15:22, 34 etc.).

The term “Hermeneutics” has become a theological jargon. It is a process that leads to a comprehensive study based on rules through which interpretation occurred (Corley 2002:58). According to Ricoeur, the term “Hermeneutics” can be defined as “the science of the interpretation” (Ricoeur 1969:311). Based on Ricoeur's term “interpretation”, Blocher went further by stating that: “To interpret is to express the meanings from a way and in a language that facilitates the comprehension. Then, the interpretation will be faithful, if the expressions, in the two languages, are equitable” (Blocher 1976:25). For Packer:

In the strict meaning, hermeneutic is the theory that aims to explain how we come to the comprehension; in this case, it turns its attention to the human subject. But we commonly using the term hermeneutic to designate the theory of the Scriptures interpretation; in this case, it turns its attention to the Scriptures. [...] we have defined interpretation as a manner to read a whole book on a way to present its relevance for modern human beings. Biblical hermeneutic is then defined as the study of theoretical principles in the clarification of the relevance of the Bible and its language for our time (Packer 1978:8).

From this affirmation of Packer, we can see another way of defining the term “Hermeneutics” by Kuen. He affirms that “hermeneutic is the theory of the

interpretation” but at the same time, it tries to elucidate the meaning of the biblical text for us today in spite of the cultural gap between the text and the contemporary reader. Kuen has a global understanding of hermeneutic as « the direction for use of the Word of God” (Kuen, 1991:20-21).

An interpreter is a translator who plays the role of halfway between two persons of different languages who do not understand each other. Without interpretation, the message will not be understood. The interpretation plays the role of mediation between a person who speaks and one or several persons who listen. The “hermeneutic is both a science and an art” (Kuen 1991:20-21). It is also defined by Blocher (1976:25) as a “renouncement of the immediate facilities”. Many methods are developed but the interpreter must work hard to succeed his interpretation. In another way, hermeneutic is the theory which aims at explaining how we are understanding.

In conclusion, the biblical hermeneutic is a method whose purpose is to lead the believer to a good understanding of biblical texts in order to apply it in its right value. This implies according to Bruce (2014) that “everybody who reads the Bible and tries to apply it in their life is already doing the hermeneutic”.

#### **1.3.4.2 Brief historical of biblical hermeneutics**

Though biblical hermeneutics history, I found many theological debates about hermeneutic. In this part, we are going to give a general historical survey of theological hermeneutic that will provide a wide view on hermeneutic.

Hermeneutics is not a recent phenomenon. The Greco-Roman Jewish, the authors of the New Testament, the Church Fathers, in the Middle Ages, the Reform and the Post-reform period, the modern time, in secular philosophy, all used hermeneutic to interpret the contemporary sacred texts. In fact, hermeneutics has a long history. Modern hermeneutics has its roots in Kant's<sup>1</sup> theories. The fundamental idea in this biblical interpretation was clearly apologetic. A particular evolution occurred in the history of hermeneutics with the approach of Bultmann. But his approach will be contested by Fuchs and Ebeling who propose hermeneutics called "new hermeneutics" (Thiselton 1986:1). In history, the emergence of several different approaches of interpretation is registered (Padilla 1981:23 - 29). Among them, we underline the "Historical-Critical" method victim of a knocker in its time.

The "Historical-Critical" method is a method that marked the theologian's mind in hermeneutics debates. It consists to better understand the texts in their context. It is more interested on the historical and cultural conditionings of the texts. The method hence created a gap between the Bible and the Church, but also, a hermeneutic suspicion. This method does not permit the text to express itself to help the contemporary reader to listen and be questioned by the message. In other words, the Historical-Critical method refuses to receive and to interpret the biblical text as it is in its canonical final form.

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<sup>1</sup> Kant considers two level of knowledge: the empiric knowledge and the transcendent knowledge.

Barth (in Wiher 2014:7), Bultmann (in Eskola, 1999:63), Maier (1977), and Stuhlmacher (in Wall, 2015:9) are known theologians in these debates on the Historical-Critical method. For Maier (1977), we must outright replace it, because he supposes that it is opposed to the Bible and is against the Christian faith. Stuhlmacher (Wall, 2015:9) finds that it destroys the faith instead of strengthening it. A deep understanding of the relevance of the biblical texts for the people of God required going beyond this Historical-Critical method. This critique stimulates some theologians to find the necessity to elaborate a hermeneutic which will guide the Church in its manner to read biblical texts.

Actually, a new horizon is opening towards new hermeneutics known under many expressions: “Theocentric Hermeneutics”; “Christocentric Hermeneutics”; “Messianic Hermeneutics”; “Ecclesiocentric Hermeneutics”; “God’s Reign Hermeneutics”; “Critical Hermeneutics”; “Spiritual Hermeneutics” and “Missiocentric Hermeneutics”. In these hermeneutics, there is different calling as “Missionary Hermeneutic”; “Missional Hermeneutic”; “Missiological Hermeneutic” (Wall, 2015). The “Missional Hermeneutic” is the method that Wright proposes us in his approach to mission in the Bible and more precisely, in the Old Testament.

#### **1.3.4.3 Wright’s definition to the missional hermeneutics**

Nussbaumer noted that, the term “missional” design all the elements that characterizes the mission, get a priority usage by Wright comparatively to the term “missionary” (Nussbaumer 2014:21-22).

A “Missional Hermeneutics” according to Wright, is an approach which considers that “the entire Scriptures constitute a missional phenomenon” (Wright 2012:43). Reading the Bible in the missional perspective is not at first to do the exegesis on a text to discover its missiological meaning that can exists in its first sense. “A missional reading rather consists of discern the problem, the need, the controversy or the menace around the origin of the text and which the people of God were confronted to within the context of their vocation” (Wright 2012:44). Wright sums it up this way and declares that “a missional hermeneutic will proceed from the idea according to which all the Bible presents us God’s mission history through the people of God in his relationship with the world of God, to the benefice of all the creation of God” (Wright 2012:47).

From this understanding, Wright presents the difference between the biblical foundation of the mission and the missional hermeneutic of the Bible. The first focuses on isolated passages talking about mission in order to prove the Bible’s authority. The second “is interested in the nature of the biblical authority in relation with mission” (Wright 2012:47). For Wright, the authority is a reality that is not only an order, but also a permission that legitimates our acts and gives the freedom to work according to some limits. Concerning our mission, he supports that it results with assurance from the Bible’s authority. For him, the missionary imperative authority emanates from the indicative of the

identity and authority of Jesus Christ, crucified, and resuscitated (Wright 2012:49). According to Wright:

A missional hermeneutic of the whole Bible is not only missionary hermeneutics of the entire Bible...will not be obsessed only with the great imperatives concerning mission, such as the mandate of Matthew 28.19-20, nor will we it be tempted to impose any presumed priority dimension on them [...]. Instead, we will situate these great imperatives in the context of the indicatives that found them, namely everything that the Bible says about God, about creation, about human life and the paradox of his dignity, and his depravity, about the great and glorious redemption, and about the new creation where God will dwell with his people. Thus, mission hermeneutics cannot consider biblical indicatives without the imperatives that they arouse. Such hermeneutics cannot isolate certain biblical imperatives from the overall indicative context of the Bible. Missionary hermeneutics seeks to have a holistic knowledge of mission, from a holistic reading of the biblical text (Wright 2012:59).

In this definition, Wright realizes that he is on a new field, where he is developing some new theses. At the same time, he should be humble by knowing that his contribution is not final. In this case, he estimates that it “is evident that to set up missiology as a viable frame for the biblical hermeneutic, constitutes a project that is far from being closed” (Wright 2012:43).

### **1.3.5 Kingdom of God**

The conception of the Kingdom of God was progressive. The terms “reign”, “kingdom” and “royalty” are the key words in this definition. It refers to the term *basileia* and generally to “*hkl'm.m;*” (*mamlAkAh*) in Hebrew language (Djaballah 2004:1406). Basically, these words do not

have the same meaning though they are complementary. They all are guided by the term “royalty”. “When the royalty comes true and becomes effective, it is reign. When it acts in countries and upon subject, it gives place to a kingdom”. Royalty is subjective, kingdom is objective, reign is the passage from the subjective (reign right) to the objective (upon subjects and territory) (Djaballah 2004:1406). Indeed, the concept of reign or of the kingdom of God is a key concept in Christian theology. For it is not found among other great religions of the world, only in the Christian religion (Bockmuehl 1977:20). It is then an ownership to the Christian religion and constitutes a significant and single characteristic to Christianity (Bockmuehl 1977:20). It is then good to question oneself about its meaning in this particularity what it represents in the Christian faith.

Beginning with Saint Augustine, the Kingdom of God was identified to the Church. The Roman Catholic Church was influenced by this approach. They understood it literally and considered the State as being inferior. So, the State must submit to the Church (Runia 1980:4). When the reformers mentioned this subject in their theological reflection, Martin Luther affirmed the existence of two kingdoms: the “kingdom of Christ” and the “kingdom of this world” (Runia, 1980:4). For him, the separation of these kingdoms is not absolute because “God is Lord of the two kingdoms, but He controls each kingdom differently” (Runia, 1980:4). Calvin talks nearly in the same way but focuses more on the lordship of

Christ. According to him, Christ is the head of the Church and at the same time King of the whole world (Runia 1980:5). The Church is not the kingdom of God. It is the visible expression of the world on the earth. Calvin demonstrates his disagreement to Augustine's approach by supporting that the kingdom of God is wider than the Church and everything must submit to it (Runia 1980:5).

Lesslie Newbigin changed the trend. According to him, the Kingdom of God is the reign of God over everything (Newbigin 1995:31). He identifies the Kingdom of God to a government. That means, God the Father, is a governor who exerts his sovereignty over all the peoples and all the creation (Newbigin, 1995:31). The Kingdom of God is in this way, the authority that God uses on the universe. Many other theologians look at the concept "Kingdom of God" differently. Johannes Nissen, in the New Testament perspective, focused on the Gospel according to Matthew 5.20 and 6.33, defined the kingdom of God as righteousness and justice life that surpass the Pharisees and Scribes religious practice (Nissen 2002:25). In Marc 1.14-15, we can see that the kingdom of God is understood as the crossing of frontiers. G. Blount thinks to God's redemption intervention in the human history through Jesus (Blount 1998:8). Runia speculates that it is difficult and even impossible to give an exact definition to the term "Kingdom of God". Nevertheless, he thinks that we can, approximatively, understand the notion of Kingdom of God in these terms:



The message of this kingdom means the announcement of the full redemption of liberation. God himself will make a new world, a world where there will have no more place for sin neither for the consequences of sin (sickness, sorrow, hunger, devil power, etc.). It is a kingdom where true peace, peace between God and humans, peace between humans themselves. A kingdom where true justice will reign. The poor will no longer be oppressed, and the starving will be satiated. A kingdom where there will be no more sickness nor deaf. A kingdom full of shalom for everybody (Runia 1980:8).

Francis Anekwe Oborji, in the same perspective adds and affirms that “the final reign of God and the effects will be, according to the Hebrew word well known for peace, a situation of shalom, in which God will be all in all, and the universal reconciliation and peace will govern the universe” (Oborji 2006:135). Timothy Tennent qualifies this kingdom, one kingdom of grace and peace (Tennent 2010:162-166). According to Hannes Wiher, the evangelical position supports that “the reign of God is operational where people give their lives to the Lord, so that He reigns in” (Wiher 2012:157). By analyzing these different conceptions of the notion of the reign of God, we find that on the one hand, some definitions are objective meaning. It concerns the authority to reign over peoples and territories. On the other hand, the position of the evangelic and other approaches essentially focusses on subjective aspects or the right to reign as king.

Runia mentions the difficulty to find a final definition of the term “kingdom of God”. However, we can retain that the terms “reign” and “kingdom” are on the same purpose for our work. For, the reign of God or the kingdom of God is and will be at the same time subjective and objective. This is addressed later in this thesis. So, the kingdom of God is the motivation of the mission.

### 1.3.6 Church

It is important to define the word “church”. That can help the reader to know which church in Burkina Faso is being talked about. The word “church” has its origin in a democratic context. The word church is from the Greek word “*ekklêsia*” which also derives from the verb “ἐκ καλέω” (*ek kaléo*) which means “called out of”. In the Greek State, the people were summoned by a herald to discuss and decide public affairs in a place called “*ekklêsia*”. The LXX translates the Hebrew word *qahal* which means the assembly or the congregation of Israel by the Greek word *ekklêsia*. In the same way, Etienne talks about the “assembly” (*ekklêsia*) that was with Moses in the desert (Kuen 1992:381).

The word is then borrowed from the Greek world in order to designate “the community of all the believers of the New Alliance through the link of faith and the regeneration action of the Holy Spirit united to Jesus Christ” (Kuen, 1992:381). Lindsell defines the Church as “a society in which humans are made perfect, a kingdom where God is glorified, an individual assembling that forms the society of God” (Lindsell, 1968:29). History can help us find four (4) images of the word church: firstly, the Greeks understand the *ekklêsia* (ἐκκλησία) as the people that are summoned to discuss and decide on public affairs. Secondly, the Hebrew understands the *ekklêsia* as Israel’s congregation. Thirdly, according to Jesus, the *ekklêsia* is all His faithful believers in the whole world. They form the Catholic or Universal Church. Fourthly, the Apostles say the *ekklêsia* is the body of Christ. We are the members and Christ is the head (Pohor, 2016:32-33).

In the theological context, we can distinguish, today, four different usages of the word “Church”. It can mean, firstly, the invisible assembly composed by all of those who believe the Good News of Jesus-Christ by forming His mystic body. Secondly, the visible assembly composed by the believers that gather in a precise locality. Thirdly, it can be the building. Fourthly, it concerns the denomination (Malipou 2011). The etymological sense and the fourth sense in the theological context are more appropriate to the framework that is presently explained. This means that my reflection concerns an assembly divided in different evangelical denominations in Burkina Faso. Those who believe in Christ, members of his body, can be a Church in a country. This research endeavours to the large family of the evangelicals in Burkina Faso. Yet, sometimes, it is possible to talk about the Universal Church.

### **1.3.7 Worship**

Worship is a title of respect for a mayor, magistrate, or other similar dignitary. It is used to treat somebody or something as divine and show respect by engaging in acts of prayer and devotion. Also, it may mean to take part in a religious service; to love, admire, or respect somebody or something greatly and, perhaps excessively or unquestioningly. Further, it means the adoration, devotion, and respect given to a deity, the rites or services through which people show their adoration, devotion, and respect for a deity (Encarta, 2009). Then, finally, it is worship, fervent and passionate love for God or somebody.

In Hebrew, the verb *chaHah*, means bend, prostrate oneself in front of a divinity or somebody. It was the mark of respect in front of a higher, human or angels (Genesis 18:2; 1 Samuel 24:9; 1 Kings 1:16, 23, 31). To worship God, is firstly, to recognize His superiority, prostrate oneself in front of him (Exode 34:8). In the New Testament, the word *proskuneô* expresses the same idea as *chaHah* in Hebrew.

### **1.3.8 Integral Mission**

The concept “Integral mission” is from the Spanish “*misión integral*”. We can also find the expression “holistic development,” which describes the same reality. The concept “Integral mission” is used to describe the church mission that consists in providing the people’s needs in all its dimension Pohor (2016:4) spiritual, social, physical, economic and political.

### **1.4 Partial Conclusion**

This chapter is both an introduction to the thesis but also a compass for the reader. It is from there, therefore, that all readers can see the interest and the motivations of the subject.

The problem that rages in concept *missio Dei* is the discussion on the origin of the mission and the missions. Everyone wants to know if mission belongs to the Church or to God. The question led researcher to understand how wright approach on *missio Dei* is important for the church in Burkina Faso. The principal purpose of the study is to help the church in Burkina Faso to work effectively in the field of mission. Then, the first step for the researcher is to

attend the research objectives, to have a better known of Wright's *mission Dei* concept and to discuss different scholars' viewpoints on the term *missio Dei*.

Through this first chapter, the researcher describes and demonstrates the research problem statement and research questions, relevance of the study, purpose of the study, limitations of the study, research methodology and design, theoretical framework, sources of information, Wright's biography, missional work and definition of the key concepts used in this research such as mission, *missio Dei*, hermeneutics, Kingdom of God, church, and Integral mission.

I live in Burkina Faso and it is at the same time my Jerusalem and my end of the earth. My participation in the Mission of God begins and ends in Burkina Faso. Therefore, I cannot remain indifferent to the missionary challenges that the church faces in this country. These challenges relate mainly to the definition of God's mission (*Missio Dei*). Therefore, based on Wright's approach, I will demonstrate that by reading the Bible, three concepts can arise, in great competition on the main idea which constitutes the skeleton of the biblical text: it is about the Kingdom of God, worship and Integral Mission. In the next chapter, I will begin exploring the church and the country in which it is located.

## **CHAPTER 2: THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH AND ITS MISSION IN BURKINA**

### **FASO**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

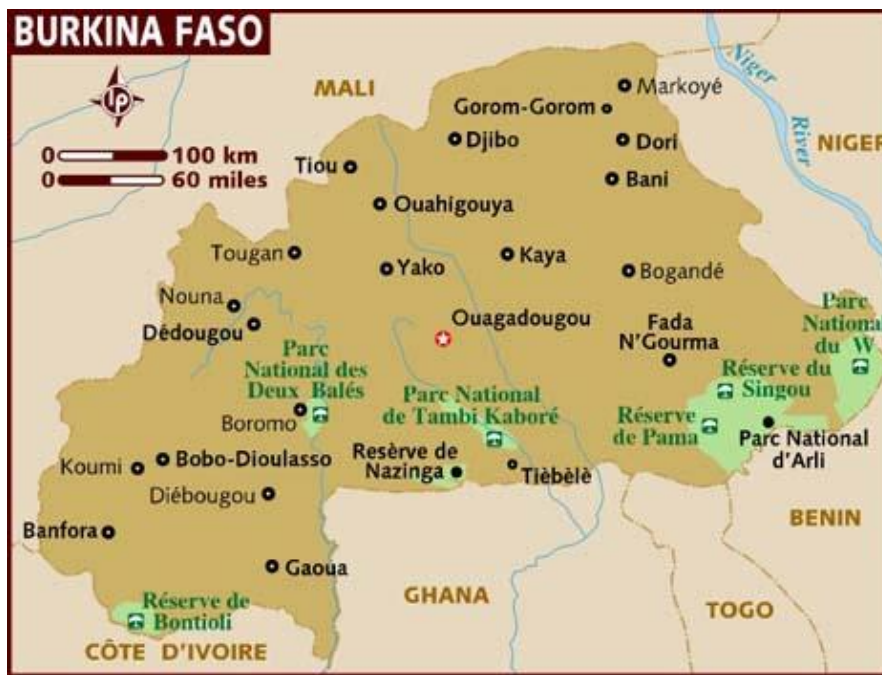
The framework of this thesis is limited in time and space. The potential target is the Church in Burkina Faso. In this chapter, the aim is to present Burkina Faso, the geographical area where the church under study. Geographical space has always been a fundamental element in God's mission plan when we consider His actions at the beginning of all things and sending the Church into the New Covenant. The geographical progression of the mission is so important that one cannot imagine it. For if God's mission is introduced into a context of missional hermeneutics, geographical space cannot be minimized. Secondly, I will describe the church of Burkina Faso. This description reveals its history, its strengths, its weaknesses and the challenges it faces. Based on this data, one identifies in subsequent chapters the suggestions and recommendations that constitute methods and strategy for the church in its participation in God's Mission.

#### **2.2 Brief presentation of Burkina Faso**

The name "Burkina Faso" is composed of two words belonging to two different languages. The word *Burkina* comes from the *Moré* language and means "man of integrity." The word *Faso* is in the Dioula language and refers to the "house of ancestors" or "country." In its entirety, *Burkina Faso* means "the homeland of men of integrity." There is a controversy to be decided because the word

Burkina is singular and not plural. Therefore, the choice is between calling it "the homeland of men of integrity" or "the homeland of man of integrity". In principle, we cannot use the term "Republic of Burkina Faso" since official terminology considers Faso to be the republican form of the state. We can, therefore, say "the President of the Republic" or "The President of Faso," assuming that the meaning of "Faso" is implicitly known. As a matter of fact, the country was called *Haute-Volta*, the moniker derived from the name designating three important rivers: Black, White and Red Volta, currently called Mouhoun, Nakambé and Nazinon. From its inception in 1919, the country carried this name until August 4, 1984 before being called *Burkina Faso*, by Captain Thomas Sankara, a year after the latter established a military regime focused on social relations. (« Burkina Faso » <http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>).

### 2.2.1 Geographical Situation



Burkina Faso covers an area of 274,200 km<sup>2</sup>, half the size of France. It is a country located in the heart of West Africa and is landlocked between Mali to the north and west, Niger to the east, Benin, Togo, Ghana and Côte d'Ivoire to the south (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>). It enjoys a Sahelian climate in the north and Sudanese climate in other areas of the territory. Burkina Faso is a member of the Francophonie or the French-speaking world. The country is divided into 13 administrative and territorial regions. Each of these regions is governed by a government-appointed governor to represent the state and national institutions, and to enforce national laws. These regions are themselves divided into 45 provinces "Burkina Faso" (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>). Each province is governed by a High Commissioner and has a provincial council. The 45 provinces are, in turn, divided into 300 departments headed by Prefects. We also count hundreds of municipalities in the country under the leadership of mayors. The capital city of Burkina Faso is Ouagadougou (<http://www.primature.gov.bf/republic/fcterritoire.htm>).

### **2.2.2 Origin of the Burkinabe people**

From the first millennium BC, the first farmers made their mark in the landscape by clearing the forest. They preceded the ancestors of the present-day Mossi, who populate the entire center of the country. The arrival of the Mossi is situated between the 11<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> centuries. The four Mossi kingdoms were gradually



constituted but never achieved political unity. They are the result of a mixture between the conquerors and the indigenous peoples but forming the same cultural ensemble. To the north, the kingdom of Yatenga was in direct contact with the Sudanese empires against whom it led expeditions including the capture of Timbuktu in 1329. It also had to defend itself from attempts at Islamization of the Songhai Empire. The other populations of Burkina Faso are the Gourmantchés, Bwas, Sénoufo, Gans, had their own history, made of an intermingling with other peoples. In the north, the Tuareg, the Fulanis, the Songhai and the Djerma have settled more recently. The 15<sup>th</sup> century marked the arrival, from the west, of Mandingo-speaking populations, especially the Dioula merchants who were the originators of the present-day city Bobo-Dioulasso Fulani (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>), Burkina Faso's economic capital.

### **2.2.3 Current demographic situation in Burkina Faso**

The country currently has 11 main ethnic groups: the Mossi, the Gourmantché, the Fulanis, the Bobos, the Gourounsi, the Lobi, the Marka, the Dagara, the Samo, the Senoufo and the Bissa. Fulani and Mossi are the majority ethnic group with about 53%. The other important groups are in the East, the Gourmantchés with 7% of the population. To the North, are the Fulanis, representing 7.8% of the population. To the south, the Gourounsi 6% of the population. Fulani (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>).

Burkina Faso has more than 60 national languages. According to INSD, "the Mooré is the most widely used language with more than half of the resident population (50.5% of which 49.7% of men and 51.2% of women). The Fulfuldé is in second place with 9.3% (9.7% of men and 8.9% of women). This is followed by Gourmantchéma (6.1%), Dioula (4.9%), Bissa (3.2%), Bwamu (2.1%). All other languages each account for less than 2%" (Ouédraogo & Ripama 2009:89).

French remains the official language, but it is only really understood by about 20% of the population. Despite the imposing demographic weight of national languages in Burkina Faso, the status of official and international language means that French gradually weighs on the social and economic life of the country. Of the 60 or so languages spoken, three languages have the status of national languages: the Mooré (or Mossi), the Dioula and the Foulfoudé. Burkina Faso is one of the most populous states in West Africa. The population is predominantly rural, with agriculture and livestock as their main activity. The term for the inhabitants of the country is *Burkinabé* or *Burkinabè* (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>).

#### **2.2.4 Status and population structures**

The status of the population gives its reflection at a given time and allows to know it in its various components. Knowledge of the population structure allows to assess the different social needs (health, schooling, employment, and spirituality) linked to specific groups and to anticipate problems that would result

from possible imbalances within the population. Knowledge of the needs of the population allows for a better outcome of the objective in this thesis, which is to understand in impact of the *missio Dei* in Bourkina Faso ([http://www.insd.bf/fr/IMG/pdf/monographie/monographie\\_est.pdf](http://www.insd.bf/fr/IMG/pdf/monographie/monographie_est.pdf)).

### **2.2.5 Overall population volume**

As of the 2006 census, the population of the country was of 14,017,262 (Boureima, 2018:17) and in 2018, it was estimated at 20,244,080 (Boureima, 2018:24). The population is mainly young men and women. The male-to-female ratio is in favor of women throughout the country but hides disparities between municipalities and residential communities. The population is unevenly distributed throughout the territory: population pressure is greater in urban areas than in rural areas ([http://www.insd.bf/fr/IMG/pdf/monographie/monographie\\_est.pdf](http://www.insd.bf/fr/IMG/pdf/monographie/monographie_est.pdf)).

## **2.3 Religious Situation in Burkina Faso**

Religion brings people together around several principles and values that can influence the behaviours and attitudes of followers. In Burkina Faso, the analysis of socio-cultural characteristics shows regarding religious practices that the main ones are animism, Islam, and Christianity. According to figures from the National Institute of Statistics and Demography, Islam is by far the majority religion in Burkina Faso with 60.5% of the population. Other religions in descending order are the Roman Catholic Church with 19.0%; 15.3% for animists and 4.2% for

evangelical Christians (Protestant). Very few people are classified as without religion or atheist (0.4%) (Ouédraogo and Ripama 2009:93). In the country, other religions, usually called cults by the main religions account for 0.6% (« Burkina Faso ») (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>). Several other sources give contrary information. As such, another source states that "experts estimate the Muslims at more than 40% of the population, Christians at about 20% (of which 12% are Catholics, with, over the last decade, an explosion of evangelical movements), and that of animists and those retaining a traditional religion of around 40%" ([www.jeuneafrique.com/article/ja](http://www.jeuneafrique.com/article/ja)).

## **2.4 Historical-political timeline of the country's creation**

### **2.4.1 Pre-colonial history**

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the territory of present-day Burkina Faso was composed of several small warrior kingdoms of the Mossi and Gourmantché. The territory is unified by the Dioulas around the Volta in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (« Burkina Faso » ([www.le-burkina-faso.blogs-de-voyage.fr](http://www.le-burkina-faso.blogs-de-voyage.fr))). At the beginning of the 19th century, the Bambara kingdom of Segou and the Fulanis from Macina settled in the region and Islamized the Voltaic East. In 1895, the Mandingo Samory Touré (circa 1830-1900), formidable men of war, tried to form a state in the Savannah Fulani (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>). Very little is known about the history of the country at that time because the information is from oral sources.

### 2.4.2 Colonial History

The colonial era was one of the periods that marked the history of Burkina Faso. Exploration of the country began in 1886-88 by explorer L. G. Binger. In 1890, a second explorer, F. Crozat set foot on the territory. In 1890-1891, the French explorer P. L. Monteil obtained protectorate treaty on the Liptako and Yatenga. On June 16, 1895, the general government of the AOF (French West Africa) was created. ([www.le.burkina.faso.blogs.de.voyage.fr](http://www.le.burkina.faso.blogs.de.voyage.fr)). Ahead of the British and Germans, the French Voulet and Chanoine seized the city of Ouagadougou in 1897 and signed protectorate treaty. In 1898, the country was integrated into the colony of French Sudan and placed under protectorate (« Burkina Faso » ([www.le.burkina.faso.blogs.de.voyage.fr](http://www.le.burkina.faso.blogs.de.voyage.fr)). Subsequently, the French will take very little care of the development of the country, which will serve mainly as a "labor reservoir" for plantations. « Burkina Faso » (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>).

From 1904 to 1919, these new territories of the French colonial empire were attached to the colony of Upper Senegal and Niger, integrated into the AOF and encompassing Sudan and present-day Burkina Faso. In 1916, major resistance movements to the conscription were developed. In 1919, the colony of Haute-Volta was created, with Ouagadougou as its capital. In 1932, Haute Volta was dismembered under pressure from European settlers from Côte d'Ivoire, French Sudan (now Mali) and Niger for budgetary reasons. The central and southern Haute Volta were annexed to the colony of Côte d'Ivoire, the north integrated into French Sudan and the east to Niger. Haute Volta, for which many

of its inhabitants had fought for the Free France on the European battlefields of World War II, regained its unity in 1947 when the colonial administration rebuilt the country within its limits of 1932 (« Burkina Faso » (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>)).

### **2.4.3 From independence to revolution**

Haute Volta became an autonomous republic in 1958 within the Franco-African Community, under the leadership of Maurice Yaméogo (1960-1966). In 1959, the country joined the Council of the Entente, an organization that brought together the French-speaking countries of the region: Côte d'Ivoire, Niger, Dahomey (now Benin) and Togo. The country gained independence on 5 August 1960 under the name Of Haute Volta. President Yaméogo was ousted from power during a popular uprising in 1966. He had established a one-party system; his management of the country had been very controversial. The political history of this country will then be marked by numerous coups (« Burkina Faso » (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>)).

Colonel Aboubacar Sangoulé Lamizana (1966-1980), the second president of Haute Volta, succeeded Yaméogo, who resigned following the popular uprising of 3 January 1966. He, too, established a draconian economic policy. He was elected by universal suffrage in 1974, but popular protests, once again, led to the downfall of the military government in 1977. In 1978, Lamizana resumed his duties as President of the Republic. Two years later, a new wave of discontent led to another military coup, which brought Colonel Saye Zerbo

(1980-1982) to power on 25 November 1980. In 1982, young officers overthrew Zerbo, establishing a new military government led by Captain Thomas Sankara, while Medical Commander Jean-Baptiste Ouédraogo (1982-1983) seized the presidency of Faso on November 7, 1982. (« Burkina Faso » (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>)).

#### **2.4.4 From revolution to democratization**

The arrest in August 1983 of Thomas Sankara, then prime minister, triggered the intervention of the army and opened a period of revolutionary exaltation that would profoundly mark the country. Thomas Sankara (1983-1987) became president in a coup d'état on August 4, 1983. As president of the National Council of the Revolution (CNR), Sankara established "Revolutionary Defence Committees" and then decided to practice a nationalist economic policy (Burkina Faso). (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>).

On 3 August 1984, the first anniversary of the coup, the country was officially renamed the "People's and Democratic Republic of Burkina Faso". Although the Sankara revolution did little to change the lives of the majority rural populations, he remained in the minds of Burkinabés, a kind of hero representing an ideal of national emancipation. Finally, on 15 October 1987, Thomas Sankara was executed, unaware of how he died or who killed him, in a coup that brought to the rule of the country the number 2 of the regime, Captain Blaise Compaoré (1987-2014), Sankara's comrade-in-arms.

#### **2.4.5 From democracy to the fall of Blaise Compaoré**

Compaoré came to power on October 15, 1987 after a coup that ended the Sankara revolution. The new Constitution of 1991 imposed multi-party rule and a certain democratization. After the failure of a National Reconciliation Forum in February 1992, political life remained dominated by President Compaoré's party Burkina Faso (<http://www.axl.cefan.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>).

Compaoré ruled the country as a putschist from 1987 to 1991, four years of rule. After the introduction of multi-party rule, Compaoré held at the same time the first elections and was first elected in 1991 for a seven-year term. His first democratic term lasted from 1991 to 1998. He was re-elected for his second seven-year term in November 1998 with 87.5% of the votes cast. After his re-election, President Compaoré had the Constitution amended to take advantage of the right to run for president as many times as he wished. During this last seven-year reign, from 1998 to 2005, Compaoré amended the Constitution and reduced the number of years of presidential office to five years and for two terms. The Constitution gave Compaoré the full right to run again for two five-year terms. Compaoré was elected in 2005. Five years later, in 2010, he was re-elected for his last term. Blaise Compaoré is not satisfied with power. As early as 2011, rumors circulated that Compaoré was trying to amend the Constitution to run for a fifth term and not a third as often heard. He wanted to stay in charge of the country for life.

From 2011 until 30 October 2014, movements against the amendment of Article 37 of the Constitution intensified and Compaoré also persisted. Several



pillars of the ruling party resigned and joined the opposition. The marching rallies multiplied. The dialogues multiplied. The artists entered the game and denounced the modification of the article. Religious leaders and some customary leaders were opposed to Compaoré's project. Internationally, although people on the continent preferred to reserve themselves, some powers, nevertheless reacted to Compaoré's disadvantage on 30 October, the date set, to vote to amend the article. It sparked an uprising that surprised the world and in less than 48 hours, Compaoré was in confusion without measure. Parliament burned down, public television stormed, violence in regions, calls for the resignation of the president. Burkina Faso went up in flames. This crisis has provoked the intervention of the military. President Blaise Compaoré finally left power on 31 October 2014 after 27 years of rule. And in the end, Michel Kafando appointed transitional president.

## **2.5 The burkinabé worldview**

The people of Burkina Faso know the importance of peaceful coexistence. Regardless of their religious denomination, they have in common to be deeply believers, and religion has never divided the country. Indeed, the issue of worship is not a problem. The joking kinship between the multiple ethnic groups, always allowed a peaceful coexistence between the different denominations. Muslims, Christians (Protestants, Evangelicals and Catholics), animists and non-religions, all live in good intelligence, and many are multi-faith families, without turning into drama (« Burkina Faso »)

(<http://www.axl.cefam.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>). Despite the territorial division of the country into thirteen regions with its eleven main ethnic groups and the sixty languages spoken in the country, the country is still spared from nepotism, the north-south problem, and any other phenomena that could divide or tear apart the people of a country. To further maintain peaceful relations in the country, a forum was organized bringing together all religious denominations and traditional leaders. This harmonization is demanded by all and they believe that « it is important to have a framework concept concerning secularism and interfaith relations Burkina Faso (<http://www.axl.cefam.ulaval.ca/afrique/burkina.htm>).

In view of this analysis, it is possible to say that the Burkinabe worldview is strongly focused on relations. The people of Burkina Faso are relational in their very nature and their culture is strongly relational. This is seen in interfaith relationships which are patriotic and focused on common interests. There is no room for religious, ethnic, tribal or linguistic differences to cause division. Harmony in society is shielded together by interpersonal relationships.

Another aspect of the desire to maintain harmony in society is the search for honor, prestige, power, fame is the central element in this phenomenon, hence a relationship-oriented consciousness or "a shame-based consciousness", according to Hannes Wiher. Although strongly oriented towards relationships, it cannot be denied that the people, in their worldview, have a rules-oriented consciousness. This is because constitutional rules no longer allowed Compaoré to modify an article for his own purposes. The rules

governing the maintenance of harmony in Burkina Faso's society, for good governance and for the socio-economic development of the country must be respected by all. A nation, strongly relational, will not allow human rights to be violated without anyone asserting them. As the slogan of the late dynamic leader Thomas Sankara states: "The Fatherland or death, we will win", the people of Burkina Faso were therefore ready to die for their homeland and not live under domination.

## **2.6 Brief history of the Christian church of Burkina Faso**

In Burkina Faso, several Christian missions entered the territory in the early 1900s (Yanogo n.d:17). At that time when missionaries entered Burkina Faso, the country was a French colony (Yanogo n.d:8). The Catholic Mission first arrived in Burkina Faso and settled in Koupéla on 22 January 1900. It initially wanted to settle in Ouagadougou, but the political and administrative situation was not favorable due to the tension between Mogho Naba and the colonial administrators over the management of the country (Yanogo n.d:17). In accordance with the delimitation of my thesis, focus will be more on the member churches of the *Fédération des Eglises et Missions Évangéliques* or FEME (the Evangelical Churches and Missions Federation). Throughout this thesis, the French acronym FEME will be used to indicate this federation of churches.

### **2.6.1 Presentation of the Evangelical Church and Mission Federation**

The Evangelical Church and Mission Federation (FEME) in Burkina Faso was born following the consequences of the Second World War. The defeat of

France in the early years of the War forced the churches and missions working in the French-speaking area of West Africa to better organize themselves in order to be able to withstand the threat of war. Thus, the Federation of Protestant Churches and Missions of French West Africa and Togo was born. The provisional organization became a normal structure in 1946. In the aftermath of independence, the federation thought it would be ideal for the regional structure to be dissolved and to give rise to independent national organizations (Yanogo n.d:54-55).

This resolution thus enabled the creation of the Evangelical Churches and Missions Federation (FEME) in Burkina Faso on August 1, 1961 and its official recognition on January 20, 1962. One denomination and six Western Missions were the founding members (Yanogo n.d:55). Today, FEME has two types of members: statutory and associate members. The latter are not counted. However, for the statutory members, in 2011 the year of the organization's jubilee, there were 20 in total, 13 national churches and 07 foreign missions (Yanogo n.d:68).

### **2.6.2 The history of statutory members of the FEME**

In this paragraph, a historical overview of the churches that have acquired the status of statutory members of the FEME is given. It is not a local church, but a denomination. Moreover, in this thesis I will deal with the 13 churches members. As for the 7 missions, their history will be included in the history of the denomination stemming from its missionary efforts.

### **2.6.2.1 The Assemblies of God Church (Eglise des Assemblées de Dieu)**

As for the history of Evangelical Protestant Missions, the Mission of the Assemblies of God was the pioneer. The Church of the Assemblies of God (AG) of Burkina Faso is derived from the missionary work of the Assemblies of God Church of the United States of America and the Church of the Assemblies of God of France (Yanogo, n.d.: 18). Wilbur Taylor and the Harry Wright couple first went on an exploration tour of the country in 1920. It was at the end of this exploration mission that the missionary team of Harry and Grace Wright, Elbert and Mary Leeper, Jennie Farnsworth and Margaret Peoples was sent to Burkina Faso. The team arrived in the country on 1 January 1921 and settled permanently in Ouagadougou (Yanogo, n.d.: 18). In 2010, the Church of the Assemblies of God had 3016 local churches, 3432 pastors, and 369685 church members (Yanogo n.d:184).

#### **2.6.2.1.1 Holistic missionary strategy of the church**

In carrying out the missionary mandate, the Assemblies of God Church used the strategy given by Jesus to the Apostles in Acts 1.8 i.e. to begin in Jerusalem and progress to the ends of the earth. Beginning with Ouagadougou, the missionaries began setting up mission stations in several other cities across the country. Then they proceeded to the training and consecration of pastors. This led to the creation of the first Bible school on April 05, 1941 in Koubri, a village about 30 km from Ouagadougou. The strategy that reinforced the ministry of

evangelism was the opening of the printing press in 1946. Thanks to this printing press, one of the projects with a contextual perspective emerged. In the perspective of evangelism, some literature helps people to read Bible in their own languages. The announcement of the Gospel via radio was introduced in 1953 (Yanogo n.d:25-30).

In implementing the cultural or creational mandate, the first missionaries of the AoG mission were unable to consider the two dimensions of the "*Missio Dei*" as Yanogo asserts: "American missionaries focused primarily on spiritual activities rather than social or economic activities" (Yanogo n.d:30). They had, in fact, undertaken vocational training before abandoning it for two reasons: the first was based on a prejudice. "They quickly turned to the idea that the enrichment provided by these trades could be a stumbling block that would later take them away from the faith." (Yanogo n.d:31). The second reason was external, because the Roman Catholic Church had accused them of competing with the colonial authority by setting up their vocational training. The French missionaries did not do better by introducing only education and health. They were not far from playing the colonizer's game because education and health do not give the faithful economic autonomy. They only attacked the social side that accompanied the colonial authorities in their acculturation project. Even in this social promotion initiated by the French missionaries, American missionaries still saw it as an obstacle to the faith. AoGs continue to invest more in the social side than in the economic side. To this end, it now has 52 primary schools and 8 high schools and colleges. It has no vocational training center (Yanogo n.d:201-202).

#### **2.6.2.1.2 Youth and children in the holistic mission of the church**

The denomination started in 1921. It was not until 1970, almost half a century later that a Youth Association was officially recognized. For children, it took three years after the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Church, in 1999, for an associational structure for children to be officially recognized in the Church. This shows that the missionaries of the AG had not involved all social strata in implementing the biblical mandate (Yanogo n.d:82). However, the researcher put many emphases on youth and children ministry and demonstrates the relevance of integral mission.

#### **2.6.2.2 Church of the Christian Alliance (Eglise de l'Alliance Chrétienne)**

The second American mission to Burkina Faso was the Christian and Missionary Alliance (CMA). It was born in 1887 and arrived in Africa in 1890. Sierra Leone was the first African country where they set up their first missionary station. In 1917, the CMA expanded its mission to Guinea. In 1919, it progressed to Mali and settled in Bamako, then in the city of Sikasso in 1923 before arriving in Burkina Faso in the same year and then settling in Bobo Dioulasso (Krabill, 1996:113-123). The pioneers of that mission in Burkina Faso were Paul Freligh, his wife and sister Marie. In 2011, the Church of the Christian Alliance had 600 local churches, 540 pastors and 95,000 worshippers (Yanogo n.d:184).

#### **2.6.2.2.1 Holistic missionary strategy of the church**

In carrying out the missionary mandate, the Church of the Christian Alliance also used the apostolic strategy which consisted of starting with the big city, before moving towards the towns and villages that surround it. This is why CMA began the mission in the second largest city of the country. In a decade, CMA had six temples in six cities with more than 1,200 worshippers. Several stations were erected, and several other missionaries were added to support the CMA missionary drive in the Bobo area. With the intention of strengthening the Ministry of Evangelism, an accelerated training strategy was launched in 1934. Over time, the need for well-trained national pastors was felt. It was therefore necessary to work with the CMA of Mali to meet this need until 1976, when the first Bible school was established in Burkina Faso (Yanogo n.d:39).

In implementing the cultural or creation mandate, at the beginning of the time of Western missionaries, the church did not take any action with a view to fighting poverty. The two main activities were focused solely on the social life. It was literacy and hospitality (Yanogo n.d:39-40). Economic action did not concern them and the history of this mission in Burkina Faso does not allow to identify the fundamental reasons. Today, the national church is making effort to promote the cultural mandate. To this end, on the social level, it has created two general education high schools, one technical high school, three primary schools, literacy centers, a vocational training center for young people in difficulty, and a social center for women (Yanogo n.d:202-203). On the economic front, it has a farm, an Economic Cooperation for Social Development, an



accommodation center, grain banks and creates Income-Generating Activities (Yanogo n.d:212).

#### **2.6.2.2.2 Youth and children in the holistic mission of the church**

The denomination started in 1923. It was not until 1981 that an associational youth structure was officially recognized in the Church. As for the children, they were under the tutorship of young people until 2005. For almost half a century of existence, the Church had no associational structure for children. This shows that the missionaries of the EAC had not involved all the social strata in the execution of the biblical mandate and the national church inherited it (Yanogo n.d:82).

#### **2.6.2.3 The SIM Evangelical Church (Eglise Evangélique SIM)**

The next American mission to Burkina Faso was the SIM Mission. The acronym has three different meanings. First, it was the Sudan Interior Mission, then the *Société Internationale des Missionnaires*, and now serving in Mission. SIM was born in 1893 in Canada. It first arrived in Africa in Nigeria in 1901 and passed through Niger to Burkina Faso in 1930. The SIM missionaries were first on an expedition on December 18, 1929 to Ouagadougou. The mission of the Assemblies of God had already been established there for almost a decade. The SIM missionaries decided to settle in the East of the country. Thus, they set up their first mission station in the town of Fada N'Gourma. Their effort at evangelization gave rise to the name AEEHV (Association of Evangelical

Churches of Haute Volta). When the country changed from the name Haute Volta to Burkina Faso, the name of the denomination also underwent a slight change by bearing the name AEEBF (Association of Evangelical Churches of Burkina Faso). Today, it is recognized as EE/SIM/BF (SIM Evangelical Church in Burkina Faso) (Krabili 1996:113). In 2018, the EE/SIM had 1,500 local churches, 1,235 pastors and 152,900 worshippers (Yanogo n.d:184).

#### **2.6.2.3.1 Holistic missionary strategy of the church**

In this missionary drive to carry out the missionary mandate, the SIM Burkina Faso uses the strategy of individual evangelism. In an attempt to cover the entire region with the gospel, the missionaries set up new stations. Thus, from 1930 to 1953, five (05) missionary stations and a Bible school were established (Yanogo n.d:42).

In carrying out the cultural or creative mandate to meet social needs, SIM in collaboration with EE/SIM, in the East of the country, opened two (02) health centers, a pharmacy and several primary schools. There was a lack of commitment on the economic side justified by the mission's limited human and financial capacity. However, it is possible to infer that this aspect was not a priority for SIM Burkina Faso. It will therefore be a legacy that it will leave to the national church (Yanogo n.d:43).

However, the EE/SIM, as a national structure, undertook several socio-economic activities. It now has several primary and secondary schools, vocational training centers, a rural development program (PEDRS), micro-credits for Income-generating activities (Yanogo n.d:212).

#### **2.6.2.3.2 Youth and children in the holistic mission of the church**

The denomination was created in 1930. It was not until 1974 that a youth association was born within the Church. As for the children, there is not a precise date for the beginning of its creation. EE/SIM has the will to look after children. However, although there is an associational structure for children, SIM had not made it a priority and not all social strata were involved in the execution of the biblical mandate (Yanogo n.d:104).

#### **2.6.2.4 The Evangelical Protestant Church (Eglise Protestante Evangélique)**

The parent mission of the Evangelical Protestant Church in Burkina Faso comes from Nigeria, from the Qua Iboe Mission following the commitment of missionary Charles Bennington of Northern Ireland. He arrived in Burkina Faso in January 1931 for a field exploration. He returned to begin the evangelism mission for good in July of the same year. He settled in Bouroum-Bouroum in South western Burkina Faso. On July 13, 1936, Jack Robertson, missionary of the Worldwide Evangelization Crusade (WEC) in Côte d'Ivoire, came to accompany Charles Bennington to Burkina Faso. A year later, Charles Bennington was recalled to Nigeria. The WEC continued the mission until 1978, when Burkina Faso's nationals took over (Yanogo n.d:47-48). In 2011, the EPE had 112 local churches, 215 Pastors and 14,000 worshippers (Yanogo n.d:184).

#### **2.6.2.4.1 Holistic missionary strategy of the church**

In carrying out the missionary mandate, one of the strategies used by this mission was to strengthen the human capital. To meet this need, a good number of missionaries were sent to different missionary fields. These actions facilitated the opening of three (03) new stations in the area between 1939 and 1960 (Yanogo n.d:46-47).

The execution of the missionary mandate was doing very well. However, the cultural mandate did not even exist, as Yanogo asserts, "...socially and economically, the missionaries did not have any specific notorious actions in the region" (Yanogo n.d:47). However, the national church did not remain on the margins of this mission. It was able to create a primary school, a high school, a technical high school, literacy centers, an accommodation center for girls and the distribution of agricultural materials to the pastors (Yanogo n.d:47).

#### **2.6.2.4.2 Youth and children in the holistic mission of the church**

The denomination was created in 1931. It was not until 1983, half a century after its creation, that an associational youth structure of was born within the Church. For the ministry among children, the Church introduced Sunday school in 1963. More than 30 years after its creation (Yanogo n.d:112).

#### **2.6.2.5 The Pentecostal Evangelical Assembly (Assemblée Evangélique de Pentecôte)**

The Pentecostal Evangelical Assembly is the result of the missionary work of the WEC. Martin Davies, who was a WEC missionary in Gaoua, began extending the mission to Leo in 1945. He later broke away from the WEC, created the Haute Volta Mission, in partnership with the Evangelistic Tabernacle of Vancouver, Canada. In 1973, a national church, known as the Pentecostal Evangelical Church (EEP), was established. Since 2001, this denomination is recognized as the Pentecostal Evangelical Assembly (AEP) (Yanogo n.d:47). In 2011, the EPE had 200 local churches, 187 pastors and 20,495 worshippers (Yanogo n.d:184).

#### **2.6.2.5.1 Holistic missionary strategy of the church**

As for the execution of the missionary mandate, the mission was able to set up five missionary stations in the space of 11 years. The first water baptism administered was in 1956. As for the cultural or creational mandate, the white missionaries virtually initiated nothing to this effect. Pastor Samuel Yaldia, President of the denomination, said in 2011 that the national church was able to start socio-economic actions (Yanogo n.d:48). Some of them are a primary school, a training in agropastoral (Yanogo n.d:204). The AEP also has a shopping center which is under its management (Yanogo n.d:213).

#### **2.6.2.5.2 Youth and children in the holistic mission of the church**

Born in 1945, the Pentecostal Evangelical Assembly was not able to set up a Youth associational structure until 1992, that is, about 45 years after the creation

of the denomination. It was half a century later that a structure dedicated to children would be created in the church (Yanogo n.d:118).

#### **2.6.2.6 The Apostolic Mission Church (Eglise de la Mission Apostolique)**

This is a church started through an African initiative. The twelve founding members were former members of the Assemblies of God who actively worked alongside American missionaries for the expansion of the Gospel in the country. EMA was born in 1959 in Ouagadougou. The young church, wanting to strengthen its capacity, found a partner in Ghana. In 1960, the Ghana Apostolic Church accepted the partnership. In the same year, EMA was recognized by the Burkinabe state (Yanogo n.d:49-50). In 2009, EMA had 125 local churches and 115 pastors. The number of members is not known (Yanogo n.d:184).

##### **2.6.2.6.1 Holistic missionary strategy of the church**

In carrying out the missionary mandate, EMA was actively involved in evangelization. As a result, it was able to conquer five provinces out of the 45 in Burkina Faso. It continues in the same vein, thanks to radio broadcasts (Yanogo n.d:189). As for the implementation of the cultural or creational mandate, EMA now has three (03) kindergarten schools, five (05) primary schools and two (02) high schools.

##### **2.6.2.6.2 Youth and children in the holistic mission of the church**

The mission has a youth organization created since 1962. However, until 2011, the church had not yet significantly integrated the ministry among children within its activities.

#### **2.6.2.7 The Apostolic Church (Eglise Apostolique)**

The Apostolic Church was founded in 1965 and officially chartered on June 07, 1974. It comes from the Apostolic Mission, which itself derived from the Assemblies of God. At first, it was also supported by the Apostolic Church of Ghana before benefiting from the partnership of the Apostolic Church of Switzerland. In 1975, the Swiss mission sent its first missionary. Subsequently, a number of missionaries also contributed to the missionary work of the Swiss Mission in Burkina Faso. (Yanogo n.d:128-129). In 2011, the Apostolic Church in Burkina Faso had 171 local churches and 153 pastors and 17,500 members (Yanogo n.d:184).

##### **2.6.2.7.1 Holistic missionary strategy of the church**

As part of implementing its missionary mandate, the Apostolic Church in Burkina Faso actively invested in itself and is, nowadays, is almost present in all provinces. With regards to the cultural or creational mandate, it has had a Bible training center since 1978 (Yanogo n.d:194). The Church also has a primary school, a technical high school and a general education college.

##### **2.6.2.7.2 Youth and children in the holistic mission of the church**

The Apostolic Church has a Youth association structure created in 1990. That is about 45 years after the creation of the denomination. In that same year, it also created a structure dedicated to children within the church (Yanogo n.d:133).

#### **2.6.2.8 The Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches (Union des Eglises Evangéliques Baptistes)**

The first Baptist Church was opened in Burkina Faso in 1939 by Yorubas from Nigeria. Through them, the Baptist Mission in the United States sent missionaries to Burkina Faso. The first missionary arrived in 1971 and settled in Ouagadougou. The second mission is based in Diabo, a town in the East of the country. The Baptist Church grew very rapidly in the country. On April 3, 1977, the Conventio of Baptist Churches of Burkina Faso was created. Since 2004, it has been recognized as the Union of Evangelical Baptist Churches (U.E.E.B.). Its headquarters are in Ouagadougou (Yanogo n.d:133-134).

##### **2.6.2.8.1 Holistic missionary strategy of the church**

In its strategy of executing the missionary mandate, the U.E.E.B first targeted the country's major urban centers. Today, it is evolving towards semi-rural and rural areas throughout the country.

##### **2.6.2.8.2 Youth and children in the holistic mission of the church**



In its commitment to the execution of the cultural or creational mandate, U.E.E.B, with a view to establishing a dynamic commitment to the mission, since 1984, set up youth and children departments.

#### **2.6.2.9 Mennonite Evangelical Church (Eglise Evangélique Mennonite)**

The project to establish a Mennonite Evangelical Church in Burkina Faso was born in 1970. The humanitarian organization Mennonite Central Committee (M.C.C.) arrived in Burkina Faso to help people suffering from a severe drought in the country. On the spot, they understood that the needs had to be tackled holistically. Subsequently, their report led to an exploration visit organized by the Africa Inter Mennonite Mission (AIMM) in 1975. At the end of this journey, the first missionaries were sent in 1978 (Yanogo n.d:143-144). The first water baptism was celebrated in 1980, followed by the creation of a denomination called "Mennonite Mission and Church". Four years later, it received its official recognition. On June 16, 1993, the National Church was officially recognized as the Mennonite Evangelical Church of Burkina Faso (M.E.C.-BF). Its headquarters are in Orodara (Yanogo n.d:145). In 2011, the Mennonite Evangelical Church in Burkina Faso had 13 local churches, 6 pastors and 374 worshippers (Yanogo n.d:184).

The Mennonite Evangelical Church practices a holistic embryonic missionary strategy. In carrying out the missionary mandate, the strategy it uses is to reach all linguistic layers by the Gospel. Subsequently, it established local churches in urban centers. In order to strengthen the capacity of this ministry, a

Bible school was established in 2008 (Yanogo n.d:194). The execution of the cultural mandate is still pending in the Mennonite Church. Similarly, no associative structure is functional for the youth and children of the church.

#### **2.6.2.10 The Pentecostal Church (Eglise de Pentecôte)**

The Pentecostal Church comes from the Apostolic Mission of Haute Volta (MAHV). Indeed, in 1962, their partner mission, the Apostolic Church of Ghana, took a new name. Instead, it became a Pentecostal Church. MAHV did not find it necessary to change its name. This is how Pastor Yanogo Pinoaga, a founding member of MAHV, decided in 1967 to leave the denomination and created the Pentecostal Church of Haute Volta. The denomination was officially recognized on July 29, 1969. Its headquarters are in Ouagadougou. It is a church of purely African initiative. Despite this, it has so far benefited from the assistance of members of several foreign missions (Yanogo n.d:150). In 2011, Pentecostal Church had 45 local churches and 21 pastors and 5434 worshippers (Yanogo n.d:184).

The church's missionary strategy respects the holistic nature of the mandate entrusted to it. In carrying out its missionary mandate, the church has made great progress. It is now present in several urban centers. To answer to the need of workers for the harvest, the church sends student pastors to Ghana to get training. The implementation of the cultural or creational mandate is materialized by the creation of a primary school and a high school. In addition, we can highlight the agricultural equipment it provides to some farmers and the

stores it manages in some commercial areas in Ouagadougou (Yanogo n.d:213). Since the 1980s, the church has been thinking about the involvement of youth and children in its missionary vision.

#### **2.6.2.11 The Alpha Mission Evangelical Church (Eglise Evangélique de la Mission Alpha)**

The Alpha Mission is the result of the missionary work of Alpha Omar and Margrit Barry of Switzerland. They unofficially started the Mission in Burkina Faso in 1982 and on February 18, 1992, it was officially chartered. Its headquarters are in Ouagadougou. The same mission had various other names in its history. It was first called "Mission Alpha" and then "Protestant Church of the Full Gospel" before becoming "Evangelical Church of the Alpha Mission" (Yanogo n.d:156). In 2011, it had 37 local churches, 31 pastors and 1,800 members (Yanogo n.d:184).

With regard to the holistic missionary strategy, the church has made progress in implementing its missionary mandate. In 2011, the church covered nine (09) provinces. Since 1994, the Pastors' training center has been operational. As for the cultural mandate, the Alpha Mission is less active. There is an association structure for young people, but none yet for the children of the church (Yanogo n.d:160).

#### **2.6.2.12 Biblical Deep Life Church (Eglise Biblique de la Vie Profonde)**

The history of the E.B.V.P is summarized in that it is the result of the missionary efforts of Nigeria's Ministry of Deep Christian Life. The first missionaries arrived in Ouagadougou in 1985 and officially chartered it the same year on August 29, 1985. Its headquarters are in Ouagadougou (Yanogo n.d:166). In 2011, the Biblical Deep Church Life in Burkina Faso had 102 local churches, 78 pastors and 5561 worshippers (Yanogo n.d:184). With regard to the holistic missionary strategy, the church has made great strides in executing its missionary mandate. The strategy used was to start with the major urban centers. From there, it progressed inland. Today, the EBVP is present in all regions of the country (Yanogo n.d:181). However, as for the implementation of the cultural mandate, the EBVP is less active; with the first primary school opened only in October 2012. On the involvement of youth and children in the missionary projects, there is an associational structure for youth created in 1995. But to this day, nothing is functional for children (Yanogo n.d:165).

#### **2.6.2.13 International Center for Evangelization African Internal Mission (Centre International d'Évangélisation-Mission Intérieur Africaine)**

C.I.E-M.I.A. is a purely African church initiative. The church began as a prayer cell at the home of the founders, Pastor Philippe Mamadou Karambiri and his wife, in 1985. Later, on December 9, 1987, they obtained official recognition of the denomination. Until 1992, C.I.E-M.I.A. was recognized as the International Center for Evangelization-African Internal Mission (Yanogo n.d:156). In 2011,

C.I.E.-M.I.A. had 212 local churches, 270 pastors and 12,000 members (Yanogo n.d:184).

Regarding the holistic missionary strategy, the church has made great strides in executing the missionary mandate. As the name suggests, evangelistic campaigns in the country's major cities in the 1990s marked the main strategy used for its expansion. Nationally, in 2011, the C.I.E.-M.I.A. was present in 44 out of 45 provinces. Internationally, it was present in four (4) Western countries, France, Italy and the United States (Yanogo n.d:182). The center extensively used the media for the spread of the Gospel. To this end, it now has its own television (Yanogo n.d:190). As for the execution of the cultural mandate, C.I.E.-M.I.A. is not so active. Socially, its contribution is only three (3) primary schools. It is much stronger in the distribution of donations to the needy (Yanogo n.d:214). Regarding the involvement of youth and children in the mandate of the church, it's pointing out that there is an associational structure for youth created in 2005, and one child created in 2009 (Yanogo n.d:172).

## **2.7 The challenge of Church mission in Burkina Faso**

After Christ's resurrection and before his ascension, the Lord left an order to his disciples, namely: "Go into all the world and make disciples." [Matthew 28:19] Evangelization is essential in the life of the church. This task entrusted to us by Christ has a particular novelty. The challenges push us to a new evangelization; new for its ardour, methods and expressions. From the legacy we have benefited from our first evangelizers, we are able to evaluate and find what is

good, correct what has been done wrong and prepare for a future that is more solid. This is why this chapter aims to bring together the essential elements that will help the church to face the challenges and to consider how to move forward in the transformation of the heart of man and his environment from a new evangelization.

### **2.7.1 Challenges related to the missionary strategy**

In going through the history of the fourteen evangelical churches in Burkina Faso, it was observed that the participation of these churches in God's mission is insufficient. Many of these denominations emphasized the spiritual side of the mission. Some have even been able to make a small effort on the social side. As for the economics component, precisely entrepreneurship, many of them have nothing. Even those who have started something have not been able to move forward. *Missio Dei* would like the participation to consider all the members in each denomination. Moreover, it has also been observed that young people and children are generally not included in missionary projects of the denomination. The mission of the Church is still struggling to reach the full stage of God's mission.

### **2.7.2 Religious challenges**

The country has been since antiquity, the center of animism. But today, in addition to traditional religion, there is Islam that pose a major challenge for the church in Burkina Faso. Of these two, Islam still occupies a more decisive

position because of its clear dominance in numbers in the country (60.5%), probably due to the influence of its proximity to the highly islamized Sahel countries such as Niger, a country with more than 95% (Abdoulaye Sounaye, « L'Islam au Niger: éviter l'amalgame », *Humanitaire* (20 juillet 2011), consulted 26 February 2020. URL: <http://journals.openedition.org/humanitaire/1023>) Muslims, and Mali where more than 90% claim to be Muslims (l'islam au Mali: diversité des pratiques et dynamiques actuelles, (<http://africansecuritywork.org>, consulted 26 February 2020). Islam challenges the church in its political, social commitment and influence in entrepreneurship. The introduction of terrorism, confused with jihadism and big banditry, has led the church to believe, since the first attacks of Christians, that Islam in its general forms is its main threat today. As a result, this phenomenon reduces the geographical expansion of the church.

## **2.8 Opportunities and obstacles for the proclamation of the Gospel**

Most of what constitutes an opportunity is at the same time an obstacle in another dimension. The church, therefore, has a responsibility to discern what constitutes an opportunity and to take advantage of it, as well as to also detect the conditions in which the same phenomenon can be an obstacle in order to find ways and means to circumvent them.

### **2.8.1 Opportunities**

The most important factor in the worldview of the people of Burkina Faso is their unity and religious tolerance. This value paves the way for easily communicating

the Gospel. Indeed, in Christ's priestly prayer, in John 17, there was mention that the disciples were one. In such a society, Christ's disciples have an interest in living the unity that the Lord demands of them. For such a people know the importance of the notion of unity in a big or small social group. Unity goes together with love. In addition, the Evangelical Church in Burkina Faso can easily win over people to Christ by developing the dynamism of interpersonal relationships. The people of Burkina Faso know the value of relationships. Jesus encouraged us to love when he declared to his disciples in John 13:35 that "to this all will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another."

It is presently demonstrated that the culture of the people of Burkina Faso largely promotes the centripetal momentum of the mission. If a population demands respect for constitutional texts at the cost of their lives, texts drawn up by human beings, how much more so, the Church, and every Christian in particular, should consider the Sacred Scriptures, written under the inspiration of God in the name of mission. In addition, in our theological institutions and denominations, there are texts that govern our functioning. It would be a humiliation for the Church if leaders do not respect it. A church where leaders neglect the texts of the church, it is obvious that this church can no longer impact the life of the world that surrounds it, neither in the centripetal or centrifugal impulse of the mission. It completely loses its credibility in society.

### **2.8.2 Obstacles in the proclamation of the Gospel**



Burkina Faso's culture is not only conducive to the verbal and non-verbal communication of the Gospel. It is full of elements that can hinder the communication of the Gospel. It would be difficult for a people who are willing to claim their rights through violence to adhere to a religious denomination that advocates non-violence. While the Bible calls for vengeance from the Lord: "Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath" for it is written "it is mine to avenge; I will repay, says the LORD" (Romans 12:19) and asks for gentleness and humility, we understand very easily that the Christian faith can be seen as encouraging an attitude of cowardice and laissez-faire.

When statistics give 60% Muslims and 23% Christians, it is understandable that the Gospel is difficult to accept in such a country. It is true that Muslims claim that Islam is a religion of peace. They say it in their words but deeply know that the *Koran*, and even Islam in its history, was established on the basis of violence. Moderate Islam, which is believed to be peaceful, is a sect of Islam and does not constitute the true face of Islam. Its doctrine, of a violent nature, cannot fail to spread rapidly among the people of Burkina Faso. The Church needs to rework her strategies for church plantings and methods of evangelization in order to win over this people to Christ who presents so many obstacles to the proclamation of the Gospel.

Poverty and unemployment are an opportunity for Islam to attract maliciously the people to their religion. However, the importance of its contribution becomes an obstacle for the Evangelical Church, as the church lacks enough means to meet this socio-economic need of the community.

## **2.9 Partial conclusion**

In this chapter, the presentation of Burkina Faso helps researcher to know the geographical challenge faced by the Christian mission in Burkina Faso. Secondly, the demographic situation, status and population structures, religious situation, historical-political timeline help to know the burkinabé worldview. It helps the church to know his target public to elaborate a strong strategy of mission in the country. Finally, the history of the Christian church of Burkina Faso, help himself to discover his strength and weakness to better participate in the mission of God. All this constitute for the Christian church in Burkina Faso, both opportunities and obstacles for the proclamation of the Gospel.

The purpose of this research is to lead to a better understanding of the current physical, demographic, cultural and religious realities of the country. This information serves as tools that allows to better assess the level of challenges associated with the Church's missionary and cultural mandate in Burkina Faso. The history of Burkina Faso demonstrate that le people is constantly looking for justice and social developement. These constitutes an opportunity for the church to proclaim the justice of the kingdom of God and promo.

The challenges facing the Burkina Faso Church are religious, cultural, and socio-economic. In terms of religion, traditional religion and Islam are potential opponents of the Church and constitute a great challenge for the mission. Insecurity linked to terrorism, jihadism and widespread banditry, which give rise to extreme violence in the country, greatly reduce the church's

intervention in Burkina Faso. Some peoples, precisely the Fulani, are becoming more and more inaccessible, hence the church's economic intervention is hampered. At this point, the mission of the church becomes partial and loses the vision of the *missio Dei*, which is meant to be integral.

As now we know the church and his world (Burkina Faso), the essential is to know what the *missio Dei* means really and how it can be helpful to the church in Burkina Faso for a really participation of the church members to the mission.

## **CHAPTER 3: HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF THEOLOGICAL DEBATES ON THE CONCEPT OF MISSIO DEI**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The concept of *missio Dei* has a long history dating back to the time of St. Augustine of Hippo (Tormod 2003:482). This concept was implicitly at the center of debates about the role of the three Persons of the Trinity in God's redemptive plan for humanity from the earliest centuries of the Church. The concept itself, appeared at some point in the history of the Church, but with a distorted understanding. This misunderstanding of the term was at the centre of the origin of the debate that motivated many theologians to write in order to give their point

of view. The debate is not over, and that is why this work is necessary.–This chapter focuses on the plan to trace the history of the mission Dei concept in its highlights in order to arrive at the evidence that this work will serve as a summary contribution to the reflection on the concept.

### **3.2 Origin and evolution of the concept of Missio Dei**

I have been demonstrated different definitions of concept *missio Dei* in the first chapter of this thesis. Through this chapter, I will describe and demonstrate the relevance of this concept according to different scholars and significant for the Christian mission in Burkina Faso. This analysis contributes to the discussion and originality of the study. However, the notion of *missio Dei* is not an idea that is explicitly depicted in the biblical texts of French translation. Although the terms "*missio*" and "*Dei*" are Latin and appear in the Bible translated into Latin, it is not the case for its compound form that gives the expression "*missio Dei*". It certainly has an origin and a definition related to its history which then brings to light its relevance in biblical texts. This section is, therefore, devoted to the definition, origin and evolution of the concept of *missio Dei* in theological debates.

#### **3.2.1 Origin of the concept of missio Dei**

The concept of *missio Dei* is defined in the previous sections. It is not, however, enough to settle for just a definition of the term. Its genesis and its emergence in theological debates are also important in the present study.

### **3.2.1.1 Missio Dei in the doctrine of the Trinity**

As described in the chapter 1, the Trinity in Latin were defined as trinitas, lit, trias, from trinus which means God is one God but in three coeternal consubstantial persons or hypostases – the Father, Son (Jesus Christ) and the Holy Spirit – as one God in three divine persons (Kalemba 2020). However, the origin of the *missio Dei* concept goes back to the emergence of the notion of Trinity in the theological discussion. Hannes Wiher argues that the notion of *missio Dei* has a "historical development in relation to that of the notion of Trinity" (Wiher 2014:12). As I have demonstrated previously, the concept of *missio Dei* cannot be understood independently of the relationship that exists between the Persons of the Trinity. It is, therefore, noted that the origin "of the term Trinity is attributed to Tertullian (approx. 155-220) who reflected on the notion from an 'economic' perspective" (Wiher 2014:2-3).

By "economic," Wiher designates God's action in the plan of salvation and the participation of each of the three divine Persons in the fulfillment of this plan (Wiher 2014:3). From the middle of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the three divine persons occupied a crucial place in the community life of Christians. The idea of the Trinity gained significant value in Christian communities and was implicitly seen as a comprehensive work of God. Jules Libreton points out that in the Simonian Gnosis, Simon was considered a deity by his disciples (Libreton, 1928:92). They were certainly influenced by the Trinitarian understanding of God that Christians nurtured strongly within them. Thus, in the worship of Simon, "the

Samaritans worship in Simon the supreme God, the Father; the Jews worship him as the Son i.e., the messiah; pagans as the first Thought or the Holy Spirit" (Libreton, 1928:92).

However, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, the debate on the Trinity were conducted from a largely apologetic perspective to convince non-believers of the truthfulness of Christianity, and not to demonstrate that the mission had its origin in God. The search for the origin of the mission was not the primary intention of the Fathers of the Church in this theological demonstration of the bond between the Persons of the Trinity. The appearance of "the term *missio Dei*" is essentially in their reflection on the doctrine of the Trinity" (Wiher, 2014:2). Nevertheless, they laid the groundwork for the later establishment of an intrinsic link between the notion of *missio Dei* and the term Trinity.

#### **3.2.1.2 Missiological emergence of the concept of *missio Dei***

The concept of *missio Dei* has its origin in the writings of St. Augustine of Hippo (354-430) (Rakoto 2013:6). The latter was the first to mention the phrase when he reflected on the sending of the Son by the Father and the sending of the Holy Spirit by the Son and The Father (Rakoto 2013:6), what St. Thomas Aquinas will call "divine processions" a few centuries later (Zorn 2004:7). Together with Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, the mission belongs to the Triune God. Their approach does not evoke the sending of the Church on a mission. The assertion of St. Augustine seems to make a historical summary without dwelling on the notion of *missio Dei* as the very source of the mission. And yet, "mission has its

origin in the heart of God, who integrates his people, the Church, into his mission" (Wiher 2012:158).

From St. Augustine to the middle Ages, the concept of *missio Dei* was not well received (Wiher 2012:157). God's mission, as a reality of God's action in human history, has been going on for centuries. Wiher believes that this action of God in the field of redemption is visible in the Bible from Genesis 3.15 to Revelation 20 (Wiher 2012:157). The first time to consider the mission as that of God, dates back to the Middle Ages, when the famous Latin expression *missio Dei*, which bears the literal meaning "sending God", was reintroduced into theological reflection. The theologians' understanding of the notion of *missio Dei* was limited to two actions: The Father sends the Son "Jn 3.16; 20. 21," and then the two send the Holy Spirit "Jn 14. 16, 26; 15. 26; 16. 7" (Wiher 2012:157). The sending of the Church was not yet mentioned due to ignorance or their theological conviction.

### **3.2.2 Historical-theological evolution of the *missio Dei* concept**

Shortly after the Middle Ages (5<sup>th</sup> - 15<sup>th</sup> century) until World War II, the theology developed about the mission was based on the mission of the Church (*missio ecclesia*), but after this war, the Latin term *missio Dei* returned to the center of missiological debate on mission (Wiher 2012:1).

#### **3.2.2.1 Theological deviation and return to the notion of *missio Dei***

The concept of *missio Dei*, introduced into Catholic theology by Augustine from the perspective of divine processions, took a different direction centuries later. Ignatius of Loyola (1491-1556) zealous for the extension of the Christian religion, draws inspiration from these famous "divine processions" and asks the Pope to send missionaries for the Christianization of the new discovered continents (Rakoto, 2013:9). Up to Loyola, the notion of mission (*missio*) was limited to intra-Trinitarian relations and even divine action in the world (the incarnation of the Son and the sending of the Spirit).

The term *missio* was not used to refer to the mission of the Church, but rather to the mission of the Persons of the Trinity. It is only with Loyola that the term *missio* is combined with *ecclesiae* and the concept contained in the term *missio* enters in the language to speak of the action of the Church in the world. It was from the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century that German Protestant theologians began to reflect on the concept of *missio Dei* and its importance for mission theology, evidently originated in Catholic theology. They thus questioned the ecclesiocentric understanding of the mission (Wiher 2012:157-158).

All Christian denominations, namely, liberals, Orthodox, evangelicals, Roman Catholics, Pentecostals have come to understand that the notion of *missio Dei* cannot be ignored in mission theology (Bosch 1995:527). This awareness is obvious because the definition of the concept as theocentric of the mission clearly shows that it is a foundation for the Christian mission.

### **3.2.2.2 Historical timeline of the leaders of the *missio Dei* concept**



To sum up, as previously mentioned, St. Augustine (354-430) is the first to use the Latin term *missio Dei* (Rakoto 2013:6). Later, in the middle Ages, specifically in 1540, Ignatius of Loyola's zeal for mission favored an explicit use of *missio ecclesiae*. This seems to have removed the implicit link between the *missio Dei* and the mission of the Church. The Church was thus placed at the center of the mission (Zorn 2004:7). Centuries later, Protestant theologians reclaimed the notion of *missio Dei* from Catholic theologians and rethought its original meaning. Karl Barth appeared in 1932 at a conference in Berlin. He questioned the Catholic position, specifically that of Ignatius of Loyola. He opposes the *ecclesiocentric* aspect of *missio Dei* and supports his theocentrism. A year later, Karl Hartenstein (1933) analysed and supported the idea of Karl Barth (Bosch 1995:526).

The theocentrism of the *missio Dei* was widely endorsed at the Conference of the International Council of Missions (ICM), held in Tambaram in 1938 by a German delegation. Reflections on the concept intensify as time went on. Karl Barth's position was therefore decided in 1952 at the ICM conference in Willingen. David Bosch will say that it was on this occasion that "[his] influence on missionary reflection reaches its peak" (Bosch 1995:526). The notion of *missio Dei* will thus emerge in the ecumenical movement (Bosch 1995:526). The reflections and debate around the notion of *missio Dei*, therefore, took on a new dimension in the theological world. Georg Vicedom and Lesslie Newbigin also actively engaged in this debate in 1958 and 1965 respectively (Wiher 2012:157-158). All Christian movements embraced it, including Catholic theologians who

had distorted it. Among the evangelicals we note recently, the entry of Wright (2006), Timothy Tennent (2010) and Hannes Wiher (2012) in the debates on the *missio Dei*.

### **3.3 Debate of the notion of *missio Dei***

The membership of the mission to God or to the Church does not seem to have been a major concern for the early Church and the Fathers of the Church. The researcher's view is that the mission was related to the sending. Missiological reflection was not yet a concern in theological discussions. The problem that has sparked debates on the notion of *missio Dei* lies in the etymological sense of the term. I have already pointed out above that the term comes from Latin and means "the mission of God," whose literal meaning would be "sending of God." Wiher (2014:1), in response to this definition, asks the following question: "But what does *missio Dei* mean in substance? Is God a missionary? Sent by whom? ». Two major issues are, therefore, at the center of the debate. The first is related to the dichotomy between the theocentric and ecclesiocentric dimension of the mission. John-Francois Zorn speaks of "'invisible and eternal processions of the Trinity God'" and "'visible and temporal processions of the agents of the Church'" (Zorn 2004:7). The question would be whether the mission is to God or to the Church. The second is within the theocentrism of the mission. The sender in the divine processions then becomes problematic.

#### **3.3.1 *Missio Dei* in the design of the Roman Catholic Church**

The doctrine of the Trinity is at the center of our reflection. Indeed, the term "Trinity" is nowhere written in the Bible. It is a term that "appears at the end of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, first in its Greek triad form, in the writings of Theophile of Antioch, and then in its Latin form, Trinity under the pen of Tertullian" (Nicole 1983:39). The theology of the Trinity, which seems to be the hallmark of the patristic era, has been much more at the center of theological debates than on mission. They did not think of it at these beginnings in the sense of mission, but rather in order to solve theological problems that prevailed in the history of Christianity. Isaac Zokoué states that: "The transition from a closed monotheism from Judaism to the Trinity God of Christianity must have upset many minds and launched a great challenge to reason" (Zokoué 2004:19).

Thus, this upheaval of minds prompted Tertullian (approx. 155-220) to be the first to introduce the term "Trinity" into theological debate (Nicole 1983:39). In patristic theology, the word Trinity means "one God in three people, equal to each other, distinct and inseparable" (Nicole 1983:39). This theology experienced great tension in the patristic era. Arius opposed this theory of the Fathers because of his position on the divinity of Christ. For him, Jesus is a demiurge and really does not share the divinity of the Father. To this end, we can take the following words from him:

God was not always a Father; there was a time when he was not a Father yet; then he became a Father. The Son was not always. All things were made from nothingness; all things are creatures and works, and the Word of God itself was made of nothingness; there was a time when it did not exist. It did not exist before being made. It too began by being created. Because God was alone. The Word and Wisdom did not yet exist. Later, when he wanted to produce

us, he made a certain being and called him Word, Wisdom, Son, to produce us through him (Urbina, 1963:254-255).

In addition to this thesis, Arius argues that: "The Word is not true God. Although he is called God, he is not really, but only by participation of grace; like all the others, he himself is said only nominally" (Zokoué 2004:21). Arian heresy affects both the Christological and the Trinitarian aspect. But in the end, Arius was condemned at the end of the Council of Nicaea in 325 (Zokoué 2004:21). Arianism fostered the development of ideas about the Trinity. The Arian heresy was first refuted by Alexander of Alexandria. Zokoué comments on his approach and affirms that "the Son was not drawn from nothingness but coexists eternally with the Father" (Zokoué 2004:21). What we may be interested in here is the argument that favors the relationship between Trinity and mission at that time. According to Isaac Zokoué: "It is true that Arianism considers only Father-Son relationships and says nothing about the Holy Spirit. But by refusing to confess the authentic divinity of Jesus Christ, Arius rejects the Trinity" (Zokoué 2004:21).

Thus, the Fathers of the Church condemned Arianism with a text that has a Trinitarian structure (Zokoué 2004:21) which they had to draw up unanimously at the end of the Council of Nicaea. This attests to the anchoring of the doctrine of the Trinity in their theological minds and attests that the mission of the divine Persons is inseparable. Up to this level, the whole debate revolved around the Trinity without any connection to the mission or the *missio Dei*. The debate that prevailed and was at the origin of the Councils of Nicaea in Chalcedon was much more apologetic than missiological in the sense of the dispute with Arius. It would be Augustine of Hippo (354-430) and later Thomas Aquinas

(1224/1225-1274) who will introduce for the first time a joint reflection between Trinity and mission. Their thesis became the basis of the theological reflection on which other mission theories are built (Wiher 2014:3).

Augustine of Hippo, by embarking on reflection on the mission, does not separate it from that of the Trinity. He developed his ideas on the mission in conjunction with the Trinity. He did so from Genesis 1. 26 "Let us make man in our image," his basic text that seems to leave remnants of the Trinity in which he notes several triads related to the psychology of man (Wiher 2014:3). Augustine made a distinction between the Ontological Trinity and the Economic Trinity. The Ontological Trinity deals with the nature of God and the Economic Trinity is interested in God's action in the plan of salvation and the role played by each of the three divine persons (Wiher 2014:3). He writes: "Well, as for the Son to be born, it is of the Father, so for the Son to be sent is to be known in his father's origin. Similarly, as for the Holy Spirit, to be God's gift is to proceed from the Father, so to be sent is to be known in his procession of the Father" (Augustine 1955:29).

For him, in the economic Trinity, the sending of the Son and the Holy Spirit, a "lower ontological" mission, is intended to make the Father known. Wiher wrote: "Having made this distinction, the notion of procession, which belongs to the Ontological Trinity, is more important than that of mission" (Wiher 2014:3). The Augustinian position, although he introduced the Latin notion of mission (*missio*) into his approach, his conclusion is unsatisfactory in the development of the *missio Dei* concept that can attribute the mission to God. For

he limits his reflection to the notion of processions and has not seen the importance of the latter for God's mission in the world.

Thomas Aquinas went even further to perfect Augustine's approach. He emphasized the very meaning of the Latin term "*missio*" (sending) and attempt to define the mission of the three Persons of the Trinity. Wiher believes that "following Augustine, Thomas distinguishes between procession and the mission of the divine Persons" (Wiher 2014:4). Thomas Aquinas begins with the following statement: "The envoy is less than the one who sends him. Yet no divine Person is inferior to the other. So, no divine Person is sent by another" (Thomas 1984-1986). For Thomas: "The mission implies an inferiority of the envoy when it is by order or advice i.e. the envoy proceeds from the principle that sends him. But in God the mission evokes only the original procession" (Wiher 2014:4).

Thus, he reached the following conclusion: "Since the Father does not proceed from any other, it is, and therefore, in no way appropriate for him to be sent; it belongs only to the Son and the Holy Spirit..." (Wiher 2014:4). In doing so, Thomas Aquinas minimizes and reduces the mission to the lower level. We cannot put the concept of *missio Dei* at its true value in such an approach. These two theologians have represented a risk to theology for the future of the Church's mission. Wiher notes that "maintaining the notion of procession at the higher ontological level of the immanent Trinity and relegating the notion of mission to the lower ontological level of the economic Trinity has negative consequences for the theology of the Church's mission" (Wiher 2014:4).

Mission emerged as ecclesiocentric in Catholic theology. Nevertheless, one recognizes that the theology of Thomas Aquinas and Augustine of Hippo, on the articulation between mission and Trinity, played an important part in this deviation. Wiher asserts in this regard that the "dichotomy between ontological and economic levels, between being and action, and finally between the divine and the human, has also resulted in the human missionary action being thought entirely separate from that of God." The consequence is visible in the establishment of the Catholic missionary movement initiated by Ignatius of Loyola (Zorn, 2001:216). Since then the concept of *missio Dei* has been replaced by a new term "*missio ecclesiae*" (Church mission) (Wiher 2014:4) or "*missiones ecclesiae*" (missionary activities of the Church) (Bosch 1995:527).

It is considered a deviation. Indeed, Thomas, in distinguishing between ontological and economic Trinity, argues that the notion of *missio* has been used exclusively in theological debates about intra-Trinitarian movements. On Loyola's side, then, instead of taking a logical position that uses the language of *missio* to speak of God's action in the world through the Church (*missio ecclesiae*), places the Church at the center as the holder of the authority of the sending and the initiator of the Christian mission. The motivation to establish the Church all over the world is, therefore, the origin of the emergence of the new concept "*plantatio ecclesiae*" (church planting), an ecclesiocentric conception of mission, in the debate (Wiher 2014:4).

The problem with the theocentric and ecclesiocentric understanding of the mission distinctly appears from there. In this approach, the *missio Dei*

becomes the "mission of the Church" considered a core institution. On this basis, the Catholic Church goes further and bases its mission theology on the following statement: "There is no salvation outside the Church" (Wiher 2012:158). The Church thus becomes the only representative of God in the world of men. From 1965, Hans Urs Von Balthasar (1905-1988) in a Trilogy developed a "Theo-missiological approach to Trinitarian theology" (Wiher 2014:4). He demonstrated his Trinitarian theology through a triptych by relying both "on the love of God in mission." In his theology, Balthasar seems to approach a more or less positive understanding of the dichotomy that could be noted "between the intra-Trinitarian and extra-Trinitarian dialogues, between the "mission of God" and those of the Church" that Thomas Aquinas had raised in his approach (Wiher 2014:4-5). However, these developments in Catholic theology did not solve all the problems with the *missio Dei*. The debate is still open, and reflections continue around the theocentric and ecclesiocentric polemic of the mission.

### **3.3.2 *Missio Dei* in the view of the Protestant movement**

In the Protestant movement, it is found that the reformers seem to have been paralyzed by previous approaches, precisely those of scholastics and those of Augustine. In Augustine, "external Trinitarian works are inseparable from what God is in himself" (Wiher 2014:5). The reformers therefore preferred not to engage very early in the debate of the Ontological Trinity. Jacques Matthey comments on their attitude with the following question: "Who are we to know the



inner life of God?" Nevertheless, Wiher notes that Martin Luther (1483-1546) will emphasize that "mission is essentially the work of the Trinitarian God and his purpose is the building of the reign of God" (Wiher 2014:6). Luther sees the Church as an instrument for the fulfillment of the mission. Jean Calvin (1509-1564) went a step further. His somewhat speculative Trinitarian theology was labelled an Arianism by the rev. Pierre Caroli. "However, the debate within Protestantism about the *missio Dei* did not take place until Karl Barth's important contribution" (Wiher 2014:6).

The reformers wanted to avoid theological blunders. Yet that is where they ended up. Indeed, the reformers' hindsight did not prevent the notion of "*plantatio ecclesiae*" by Ignatius Loyola, an ecclesiocentric definition of mission, from entering the Protestant missionary movement. This notion of mission was thus taken up in the Protestant missionary movement in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century until the emergence of a theological definition based on the notion of *missio Dei* in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Wiher 2014:4). The notion of *missio Dei* is core in the missiological reflection of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Therefore, it was not evident that the notion doesn't return to the theological field of reflection. Karl Barth's reflection will therefore first mark a new starting point for the debates on the *missio Dei* in the Protestant movement, before spreading to the other movements of Christianity.

All of Barth's theology is based on the notion of revelation. "For him, the revealed God can be nothing else but the hidden God; thus, the Ontological Trinity cannot be anything but the economic Trinity" (Wiher 2014:6). In his

conception, God remains forever in himself Father, Son and Spirit. He also maintains that sending the Persons of the Trinity is not only a way for God to reveal himself, but also to attain his redemptive plan for humanity (Wiher 2014:6). Karl Barth continues and tries to share the role of God and that of men (the Church) in the mission. He highlights the danger of considering the mission at an ecclesiocentric level. The mission can be understood as theocentric and the mission of the Church as a participation in the mission of God who himself gave this privilege to man. Wiher argues that: "Through the relationship between the Trinitarian God and man, created in his image, there is a rapprochement of the two despite the radical dichotomy between the Creator and his creature" (Wiher 2014:7). This corresponds to what Barth calls "theanthropology" in Christian theology. According to Barth, once regenerated, man receives a task or mandate that he is required to exercise in collaboration with God. In this regard, we can read it in these terms:

Therefore, our participation here on earth in the being and work of Jesus Christ can only consist of this: it is that all that happens in God in the very high places also becomes reality for us and in us here on earth by virtue of revelation and reconciliation which are only an extension in time of an eternal movement; yes, all this becomes reality for us, in spite of who we are and what we remain as long as God is not yet all in all. Our participation in the being and work of Jesus Christ should therefore not be seen as a second and complementary approach: it is identical to this being and this work, it is fully and definitively accomplished in Christ (Barth 1956:156 Quoted in Wiher 2014:7).

In this statement Barth's position is very explicit. The task of the regenerated man is not a work independent of what God has done and continues to do. It is because God has already been at work that man is

privileged to participate in his mission. Further, man's success depends entirely on the fact that God continues to do his work, but in conjunction with the men He chooses. Barth goes further by valuing the mandate God gives to his people. In his approach, he rejects any idea that can make missionary action ecclesiocentric. He centralizes everything on God. It all starts with God. He's the typical model. He is the author of the mission to which He invites his people, Israel in the Old Covenant and the Christian community in the New Covenant, to participate (Wiher 2014:7-8). Wiher supports Karl Barth's position in these terms:

By taking a step back from this dichotomy between ontological and economic Trinity, Barth values the sending of God's people (mission). This emphasis refers first to God himself: he becomes a "missionary God"; through communion with him, the Christian community becomes a missionary community; finally, for Barth, theology became a Trinitarian and missionary theology. Despite this negative perception by Brunner and others, Barth seems to succeed in thinking about the being and action of God together, the Church and the mission together, God and man together in the task of reconciliation. In the end, Barth's dialectical theology, with its rejection of natural theology, and perceived as far from missionary realities, seems to achieve a trinitarian foundation of mission (Wiher 2014:7-8).

Barth's approach revives hope for a balanced theological understanding of the mission. Barth's theology on the issue of the theological definition of mission had a considerable impact in the theological world. His approach crossed the denominational shores and has become central to the missiological reflection of all Christian tendencies. Indeed, it is to be remembered that Karl Barth did not develop his theology of mission based on the concept of *missio*

*Dei*, but on that of revelation. However, his theology allowed the reintroduction of the term into theology by the ecumenical movement.

### **3.3.3 Missio Dei in the conception of the ecumenical movement**

The introduction of the concept of *missio Dei* as the Trinitarian foundation of mission in the ecumenical movement was marked by Barth's presentation on "Theology and Mission at present time" at the Brandenburg Missionary Congress of 11 April 1932 in Berlin. However, it should be noted that Barth did not explicitly mention an implicit idea of the term *missio Dei* (Wiher 2014:8). As used in the current study, the term "ecumenical movement" refers to ecumenical movement. Ecumenism, movement or tendency toward worldwide Christian unity or cooperation. The term, of recent origin, emphasizes what is viewed as the universality of the Christian faith and unity among churches. In fact, Ecumenism is any type of effort which objectives to unite differing denominations of Christianity. Ecumenism is relevant for different religions, and it's also significant for the Christian unity (Pizzey 2019:131).

Twenty years later, at the CIM conference in Willingen in 1952, mission theology took a decisive turn. At the end of this conference, articulated on the theme: "The Missionary Obligation of the Church," the notion of *missio Dei* will be highlighted in a particular way. The political crises that plagued the two World Wars respectively triggered the need for missiological reflection. Analysis of this reflection revealed that Christianity in the West had lost its credibility. In the face of this failure of the Church, the ecclesiocentric principle was called into question

and it was necessary to find a substitute, a new foundation for the mission. The idea of a Trinitarian foundation of the mission was thus more endorsed at this conference (Wiher 2014:9). Norman Goodall states: "There is no participation in Christ without participating in his mission in the world. The Church receives its existence and its world mission through the affirmation: "As the Father has sent me, I too send you" (Goodall 1953:190). So far, the *missio Dei* formula, strictly speaking, is still absent in the final documents.

Karl Hartenstein was the first to mention the *missio Dei* formula in academic documents in a report written after the conference on behalf of the ecumenical movement (Wiher 2014:10). He based his position on a historical-salvific perspective of the mission and strongly supports the link between the action of the Trinitarian God and that of the Church. For Hartenstein: "From the *missio Dei*, only the "*missio ecclesiae*" has its origin. This fact places the mission within the broadest thoughtful framework in the history of Salvation and the Plan of God's Salvation" (Hartenstein 1952:62). However, the notion of *missio Dei*, became popular with the publication of Georg Vicedom's book (1903-1974) entitled *Missio Dei* (Vicedom 1958). This book "formulates an evangelical Lutheran theology of mission from a historical-salvific perspective and that of the reign and mission of God" (Wiher 2014:10). In his approach, he drew an important distinction between the *missio Dei*, which he describes as "general" and which "describes God's action in creation and history" and the "*missio Dei specialis*" which "specifically indicates the redemptive action of the Son and the Spirit" (Wiher 2014:10).

Up to this point, the meaning of *missio Dei* is not far from a synonym for the history of salvation recounted in the Bible as the election of God for mission, starting from Abraham to the Church. A clear definition has not yet been found. The phrase "*missio Dei*" is still in use as a "password" for all different approaches. It will grow and be a Trinitarian foundation for the Church's mission, which will replace the geographical and ecclesiocentric conceptions of mission by a theological definition. When we began to understand the notion of *missio Dei* from the perspective of sending the Trinitarian God, the challenge of expanding Christianity was no longer an initiative unique to the Church, but a participation in God's mission in the world. Despite the possible drawbacks, the Catholic, Orthodox, Ecumenical, Protestant and Evangelical movements finally adopted the *missio Dei* concept half a century ago (Wiher 2014:11). Today we can talk about a theological consensus established between these different tendencies that have accepted Willingen as the turning point in mission theology.

Evidently, the scholar's discussions on Ecumenical Movement demonstrates that despite some positive viewpoints about ecumenical movement certain scholars argues that most traditionalist catholics societies such as Society of Saint Pius X, Saint Pius V, Priesrly Fraternity of Saint Peter, Congregation of Mary Immaculate Queen, Slaves of the Immaculate Heart of Mary, etc. are opposed to the ecumenism. Contrarly to *Nostra aetate* and *Unitatis redintegratio* based on catholic papal documents *Mortalium Aninos* (1928) who supported the unity of the church (Pizzey 2019:131). But in Burkina

Faso, many evangelical churches do not accept the ecumenism. Some evangelical churches in Burkina Faso argues that ecumenism is not biblical. So, the research think that ecumenism is relevant for the church unity.

#### **3.3.4 Missio Dei in the conception of the evangelical movement**

Some evangelicals have differently understood the theology of mission developed by the ecumenical movement during and after the Willingen Conference. The consequence is that the notion of *missio Dei* was not received by the evangelical movement. Wright and Timothy Tennent recently broke the silence, but on the side of English-speaking evangelicals. In the French-speaking evangelical world, the subject is poorly discussed (Wiher 2014:12).

On the other hand, I believe that the Network of Evangelical Missiology of Francophone Europe (REMEEF) has introduced French-speaking evangelicals into the debate of the concept through the publication of the book entitled *Bible and Mission* under the direction of Wiher (2012). In addition, the contribution of Wiher's article (2014), devoted to the notion of *missio Dei*, is not to be overlooked, as well as the treatment of the subject in a recent issue of the important French-language evangelical journal, *Théologie évangélique*, published by the Free Faculty of Evangelical Theology of Vaux-sur-Seine (*Théologie évangélique*, Vol. 13, No. 2, 2014).

Wright, an Old Testament exegete, almost puts aside previous debates around *missio Dei*. He develops his own conception of God's mission without considering the Latin term (Wright 2012:15). He bases his understanding of

God's mission from a hermeneutics perspective known as "missional." Indeed, the term "missional" is a new term that Wright uses from another debate on missionary ecclesiology. Indeed, "The word 'missional' is simply an adjective that relates to the mission, or evokes the qualities, attributes or dynamics of the mission.' Missional has the same relationship to the word "mission" as "allianciel" to "alliance" or "constitutional" to "constitution" (Wright 2012:15).

He argues that "missional hermeneutics will flow from the idea that the whole Bible presents us with the history of God's mission through the people of God in their relationship with God's world, for the benefit of all God's creation" (Wright 2012:15). For Timothy Tennent, as we have also noted for Wright, the debates of the past have been poorly addressed in his approach. The particularity for Tennent is the systematic approach and the use of the Latin term. For Tennent, all missiology can be based on a Trinitarian foundation (Tennent 2010:59). He also argues that the Mission of the Church cannot be conceived separately from the *missio Dei*. For the mission of the Church has become possible only through God's invitation.

Thus, the Church's mission in the world becomes a grace. God himself took the initiative to invite the Church to participate in His mission in the world (Tennent 2010:59). Tennent goes further and develops a Trinitarian theology of culture from the missiological perspective. To this end, he affirms that God is not revealed in culture, but to humanity through culture (Tennent 2010:173). According to Wiher, in his Trinitarian theology of culture "God the Father is the Source, the Redeemer and the purpose of culture. God the Son is incarnated in



sinful human culture. [...] the Holy Spirit is the agent of the New Creation, the transformer of culture" (Wiher 2014:13).

Tennent emphasized the Church's involvement in God's mission. "For him it is important for God to perform his work in and through the Church" (Wiher 2014:14). To this end, he developed a thesis, which he called "a God-centered mission and focused on the Church" (Tennent 2010:58). As an evangelical, Tennent strongly proposes and argues that soteriology, pneumatology, and eschatology should be considered in the perspective of *missio Dei* (Tennent 2010:101). This statement means that God himself is in mission.

Wiher (2012:158) attempted to recap the evangelical position on the concept. While the ecumenical position formerly was centered on God's mission, often ruling out that of the Church, the Catholic position instead focused solely on the mission of the Church. This prompted evangelicals to consider maintaining several balances in mission theology. For evangelicals, "the Father was never sent, but he sends the Son, then with the Son, the Spirit. He is at the origin of the mission. The Son, on the other hand, is sent and sender at the same time. With the Father, he sends the Spirit. The missions of the three Persons of the Trinity are therefore distinct while being linked" (Wiher 2012:159).

In this first position, evangelicals try a balance that touches the primary meaning of the Latin term "*missio*" (sending). The sending does not apply to the three Persons of the Trinity. However, this does not establish a separation

between their missions in the world. The second position is introduced by this statement: "The evangelical position seeks to maintain a balance between God's mission and the mission of the Church and to intimately join the two" (Wiher 2012:181). For evangelicals, analogy and distinction are both present between God's mission and that of his people in history. On the one hand, in John 20. 21 this analogy between the mission of the disciples and that of Jesus is confirmed. For Jesus sends the Church on the model of the Father. On the other hand, we can note the distinction in the fact that Jesus himself is the redeemer while the disciples have only been given the mandate to proclaim this redemption to humanity, through the power of the Holy Spirit. The mission of the Church is not a continuation of God's. It can, at the limit, reflect the incarnation and not be an extension of the incarnation of the Word (Wiher 2012:159).

The third and final position supports a continuity and discontinuity between the missions of God's various human partners. For Wright, there is continuity between the people of the Old Testament and the New Testament. David Bosch, Emile Brunner and Eckhard Schnabel defend the break-up thesis. To strike a balance at this level, evangelicals believe that the mission of the disciples is in continuity with that of Israel and Jesus (Wiher 2012:75-88) and that the mission of the Church is in continuity with that of the disciples. However, there is a rupture between these three missions respectively because of the temporal gap, but above all because of God's sovereignty in the distribution of functions in his kingdom (Wiher 2012:160).

The difficulties that these different branches of Christianity have had in understanding the theology of the *missio Dei*, constitute an aperture for the development of the following idea which will revolve mainly around the linguistic aspect of the notion of *missio Dei*.

### **3.3.5 Theological synthesis**

I have just explored how theologians of different tendencies of Christianity have approached the issue of theocentrism and ecclesiocentrism according to the concept of *missio Dei*. Indeed, the problem is essentially linguistic and lies within the theocentrism itself. It is not enough just to agree that the mission belongs to God. The important thing would be to prove whether in this divine affiliation God is sent or the sender. We found in the definition that the notion of *missio Dei* could be translated as "sending God." Referring to the classical doctrine of *missio Dei*, the Father would be the one who sends the Son and the two send the Holy Spirit and finally the three send the Church into the world (Bosch 1995:526).

At the linguistic level, the debate revolves around the function of the phrase "God's mission," literally "sending God." The controversy is at the level of the genitive used. It is necessary to determine whether it is an objective or a subjective genitive. If it is an objective genitive, it will result in "the mission received by God" (Wiher 2014:1). This will not be possible according to Wiher because, God cannot be sent. Yet Jacob Kavunkal, in an unpublished article, states that "the Trinitarian God is a God who is sent, and therefore a missionary

God" (Jacob 2014). Wiher, however, suggests a subjective genitive. God would be at the origin of the mission, thus the sender (Wiher 2014:1). No one is above God to send him. Augustine had already emphasized this subjective genitive of the term "*missio Dei*" in sending the Persons of the Trinity. He had specified that the Father alone is exempt from this act. Wiher therefore offers a retrospective look at the debate in the Fathers' understanding of the term. He states that:

The genesis of the term *missio Dei* lies primarily in their reflection on the doctrine of the Trinity. The *Thesaurus Linguae Latinae* cites examples from Ambrose and Augustine. Augustine can say, "The sending of Christ is therefore the incarnation" (*Christi ergo missio est incarnatio*), and "this activity [of the Father] is called the sending of the Holy Spirit" (*haec... operatio... missio spiritus sancti dicta est*). In both cases *missio* is used in the sense of being sent (objective genitive). Augustine, however, states: "Only the Father cannot be said to be sent" (*Solus Pater not legitur missus*). *Missio Patris* (the Sending of the Father) could therefore not indicate the sending of the Father (objective genitive), but only the sending by the Father (subjective genitive or author's genitive) (Wiher 2014:2).

The research considers that if the genitive noun expresses the subject of the original verb, it is a subjective genitive. But, if the genitive noun expresses the object of the original verb, it is an objective genitive. Example, a mother's love is subjective but love of one's mother is objective. Then, from this Trinitarian understanding of the Fathers of the Church that "the Trinitarian God cannot be the one who is sent, but only the one who sends" cannot ensue from a formula like *missio Dei*. "The meaning of the expression *missio Dei* must, therefore, first be an author's genitive (*genitivus auctoris*)" (Wiher 2014:2). This position seems to reject any idea that considers God a missionary God. In this regard, Georg Vicedom replies: "To do justice to biblical conception, *missio Dei* must also be

understood as an attributive genitive. God is not only the one who sends but also the one who is sent" (Vicedom, 2002:33). Vicedom appeals to uniqueness in divine Persons. This is part of the logic of Socratic syllogism.

### **3.4 Evaluation of the different positions on the concept of *missio Dei***

#### **3.4.1 *Missio Dei* included in Trinitarian theology**

*Missio Dei* is not a cultural or religious movement, nor is it purely a human or ecclesiocentric activity. It is also not a function, an activity or a structure of the Church. It is not an exclusive sending in divine processions. Nor is it exclusive to the Church, even from a soteriological perspective. These different ways of conceiving the notion of *missio Dei* are obsolete and harmful to the advancement of the kingdom of God.

*Missio Dei* is God as the first actor of the mission. Therefore, *missio Dei*, in generic terms, is currently understood on a Trinitarian basis. Arno Meiring of the University of Pretoria offers the following summary: "Just as the Father sent the Son into the world, and as the Father and Son, together sent the Holy Spirit, so Father, Son and Holy Spirit send the Church into the world" (Arno 2014) <http://free.download2.net/r/rethinking-missio-dei-a-conversation-with-postmodern-and-e20796-pdf.pdf>). In other words, it considered that *missio Dei* is the whole of God's vision and will to make himself known to humanity, through the objectives and methods that enabled him to send in divine processions and to send the Church by a participatory invitation from the Church in order to

accomplish His redemptive plan. It is both a movement (sending) and a function (work, role).

As defined, *missio Dei* has its source in the very heart of God, who first implemented it before associating the Church with it. The notion of *missio Dei* and the term Trinity are intrinsically linked in the understanding of mission theology. The term is attributed to patristic and scholastic theology, which initially limited it to divine processions, excluding the participation of the Church. Later, in this same theological lineage, the Church would take over in Roman Catholic theology. Karl Barth is the one who awoke the minds about the need to find a good interpretation for it, without necessarily resorting to the concept. The term *missio Dei* dates back to the time of Augustine. It has become one of the main bases in contemporary missiology and a foundation for the mission since the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Arno 2014). However, it will be Karl Hartenstein who will focus on the formula *missio Dei* that has become, for half a century, one of the most controversial topics in the theology of the mission today (ENGELSVIKEN, Tormod. « Missio Dei: The understanding and misunderstanding of a theological concept in European churches and missiology » *International Review of Mission*, Vol. 92/367 (2003), p. 482ss. (<http://free.download2.net>)).

### **3.4.2 Missio Dei as a theocentric mission**

The ecclesiocentric conception of the mission really necessitated a redefinition of the notion of *missio Dei*. The approach of Augustine and Thomas Aquinas

seems to suggest that the divine procession ended at the beginning of the Church. The Church would be the last to be sent and whose mission which is distinct from that of the Ontological Trinity, still continues. This understanding currently seems to implicitly attribute the mission to the Church by separating it from that of God. For Augustine and Thomas, the Ontological Trinity is superior to the Economic Trinity (Wiher 2014:4) and the two are separate. Hans Urs Von Balthasar were the first to think differently in Ontological Trinity. As for the Reformers, they did not want to actively engage in these debates on Ontological Trinity. Nevertheless, Luther's position seems to support that the mission belongs to God and the Church participates in it.

The decisive turning point was the intervention of Karl Barth. For him "Ontological Trinity and Economic Trinity are one and the same" (Wiher 2014:6). Sending the Persons of the Trinity, therefore, has two objectives: a way for God to reveal himself and carry out his redemptive plan for humanity (Wiher 2014:6); secondly, the mission is first and foremost that of God and Men participate in it by his invitation. The Catholic theologian, Karl Rahner (1904-1984), influenced by Barth, asserted that "the economic Trinity is the immanent Trinity, and the immanent Trinity is the economic Trinity" Rahner 1970:22).

After the Willingen CIM, the ecumenical and evangelical movements confidently affirmed that the mission is God's, and the Church exists through it and its participation in this mission becomes natural (Wiher 2014:10). We can exclude any ambiguity from the following statement: "*Missio Dei* therefore emphasizes that Church and mission have their foundation in being sent by the

Trinitarian God. The challenge is no longer the extension or expansion of the 'Church' or 'Christianity', but a participation in God's relationship with the world" (Wiher 2014:11).

According to the Willingen statement on the Church's missionary call, the Church's mission is derived from the mission of the Triune God (Alan 2014). The mission is first and foremost God's mission. The Church does not have a mission of its own outside of God's mission. In this statement, it is clear that the mission of the Church is derived from God's redemptive action for the world. Moltmann thinks: "It is not the Church that has a mission of salvation to accomplish in the world; it is the mission of the Son and the Church through the Father that involves the Church" (Moltmann 1977:64). Alan Robinson adds that the Church exists because the mission exists and never vice versa (Robison 2014). Basically, the mission is the mission of God, who chose to include the Church. The mission of the Church is therefore a "participation" in the sending of God. God's mission is, in fact, within the Church and at the same time goes beyond the Church. The understanding of these approaches is clear. Ecclesiocentrism has no place in mission theology. The mission is theocentric and *missio Dei*.

However, it is not enough to think that *missio Dei* is theocentric. This gives no reason to exclude missionary work from the Church. The ecumenical movement and Catholic theologians once made a mistake. The former focused too much on theocentrism of the mission and setting aside that of the Church. The second were in the worst case. They rejected the core of the mission and



clung to the peripheral element. They put the mission of the Church first. However, God's mission and that of the Church are two realities that go together, albeit separately. But the second depends on the former, as Kalembe (2012:6) asserts: "The mission of the Church is to proclaim the gospel and make disciples, for the ministry of the Church is the continuity of Christ's ministry of *missio Dei*" According to Bowen, "the Church is by nature missionary, 'it exists by mission, as fire exists by burning'. It was the mission that created the Church. One can deduce that it comes before the doctrine and theology of the Church" (Bowen 2007:12). Mark Laing adds that "the Church is missional in its very character. God continually sends the Church into the world" (Laing 2009:91). The mission that was once seen as that of the Church will henceforth be understood as the initiative of the Trinitarian God. The creation of the term initially raised ambiguity about the Church's involvement in the mission. This tension has not yet been resolved.

### **3.4.3. God the envoy and the sending Father**

Theories related to the linguistic problem on the concept of *missio Dei* receive more attention in this reflection. This further helps to better understand the theses that support the theocentrism of the mission. Indeed, one last aspect that has not been clarified lies in the assertion that God is "a missionary God" (Escobar 2005:91-103). From the Willingen statement derives the idea that "God is a missionary God, and mission is above all His action" (Goodall 1954:189f). Michael Rakoto refers to the same conference and adds that God is both present and active in the secular and religious world. Therefore, "God is on a

mission in the world" (Rakoto 2013:12). Wiher thinks God cannot be sent. Evangelicals believe that "God is the subject of mission. It is he who sends, who is at the origin of the mission." They add that "the Father was never sent, but he sends the Son, and then with the Son, the Spirit" (Wiher 2012:159).

In these debates there are two terms that require special consideration. It is the term "God" and "Father." God is exactly a missionary God, but the Father was never sent. In these two terms, the first uses the term "God" and the second uses the term "Father." God, as the Trinitarian God is a term addressed to both the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Thus, we have God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus is God and at the same time he is sent. The Holy Spirit is God and he is also sent. The Father is God, but he was never sent. To say that God is a missionary could be applied to the Son and the Holy Spirit and not to the Father. So, God is sent, and the Father is a sender. God the Father sends God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

However, it is only the sending of God the Father that the Bible does not endorse. Referring to the passages in the New Testament where the term "sending" is mentioned, whenever Jesus speaks of his sending, he often uses the term "Father" (see e.g., Jn 6. 44). In passages where the verb "*mitto*" (send) accompanies God, the words are often reported by the apostles or the author. They allude to the Father when they use the term "God" in relation to the Son. The Father is, therefore, implied (Jn 3.17; Ga 4.4). When George Vicedom asserts that "God is not only the one who sends but also the one who is sent" (Vicedom, 2002:2), it appeals to oneness in divine people. Consider the case of

the Son and apply this approximately to the Socratic syllogism which says: "All men are mortal. But Socrates is a man. Yet, Socrates is mortal." The Son is God. While the Son is sent and sender. Yet, God is sent and sender. The same is true of the Holy Spirit. However, the Father is God, but he remains a sender and never sent. God is a missionary he is on a mission in the world. We believe that the mission is God's, and the Church participates in it under the guidance of the Spirit. The Mission of the Spirit confirms that God is on a mission or is a missionary. In accordance with Jesus' statement: "Whoever has seen me has seen the Father" (Jn 14.9), we can affirm that the fact that the Spirit is currently on a mission confirms that God is on a mission, so he is a missionary.

Many Christians understand the mission as a task that God has entrusted to the Church. The term "mission" is broadly defined above. Etymologically it designates "sending." Currently, it usually refers to a responsibility or task to be performed (Wiher 2012:159). Bowen states that this is a sending movement relationship (Bowen 2007:11). The *Missio Dei*, therefore, is both sending into "divine processions" and the Church but also a function or task or activity. From the moment a person gives himself to Christ as Savior and personal Lord, the imperative of sending automatically applies to them. The mission becomes their function, their job when they are in the process of implementing His mandate. We can understand this by this sentence: "I was sent to evangelize." That action remains that of sending and theoretical. My mission is to be sent to evangelize. "I am evangelizing," my mission becomes a function, a task, an activity that I carry out in the obedience of the order of sending. For us, *missio Dei* is the very

source of the order of sending and the mission of the Church becomes the means of carrying out this order in the world, but always with and for God. To this end, we remember that the *missio Dei* remains theocentric. If we consider it in its dimension of sending and function, the mission belongs to the Father. So, the Father is the author of the mission. God is on a mission and is a missionary, working together with the Church, not as Father, nor as Son, but as Holy Spirit. Thus, God equips the Church with the power of the Holy Spirit who is the third person of the Trinity "missioned to carry out the *missio Dei* in this period of the history of salvation" (Wall 2012:112). This last divine missionary as promised will be with the Church until the end of the Times (Mt 28. 20b; Jn 14. 26).

### **3.5 Partial Conclusion**

I have largely discussed the concept of *missio Dei* and its history in this chapter. It is worth noting that the development of the reflection on the notion of *missio Dei* is undeniably one of the most significant theological advances of the twentieth century. However, the debates around this concept are not a recent phenomenon. The concept has been the subject of publication of several books in Christian theology. This is linked to its core nature in the very nature of God and that of the Church. The classical understanding of the concept of *missio Dei* is currently obsolete in the face of the new understanding of the concept. However, it is not unimportant. Since the first centuries of Christianity, it has been implicitly at the center of theological reflection. In its history, the main themes that sparked the search for a theological definition were theocentrism and ecclesiocentrism. Known at first as theocentric, the mission would later be

ecclesiocentric because of an extremist zeal of the Church in a kind of proselytism. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, the notion of *missio Dei* returned to the center of debate. A language problem would be a major cause. As a result, theocentrism will return to the forefront in the theology of the mission on ecclesiocentrism.

The definitions were diverse, as well as the positions. All branches of Christianity have each tried to reformulate a definition of the concept. There is a consensus that seems to have been reached. However, we note that the positions that had separated God's mission from that of the Church on both sides led evangelicals to consider several balances of these different approaches, sometimes converging, sometimes diverging. For evangelicals, the mission has a Trinitarian foundation and God is the initiator of the mission. The Church does not have a mission of its own. It enjoys a simple participatory invitation to the *missio Dei*. To this end, evangelicals firstly emphasize sending in "divine processions" and then in the Church. For them, God is a missionary. However, only the Son and the Spirit were sent and never the Father. Evangelicals add that although the Church's mission is a participation in that of God, the two nevertheless remain intimately linked. Finally, they stress that the relationship between these two missions does not exclude a dimension of continuity and discontinuity between them. Currently, any reflection on God and mission, of all Christian tendencies, refers to this concept as the basis of the theological definition of mission.

It should, therefore, be noted that the Latin verb "*mitto*" (send) is at the forefront of this consensus. All the debates that prevailed before Wright, seem to focus largely on the imperatives of the New Testament and more specifically on "sending." Thus, we can notice that *missio Dei* is summarized in the sending of the Son by the Father, then the two send the Spirit and finally the three send the Church. Although we can no longer think of the mission without referring to the notion of *missio Dei*, the *missio Dei* cannot be merely a matter of sending in the New Testament. My reflection is focused on Wright's approach to the notion of *missio Dei*. In the next chapter, it will be question of finding, in light of this chapter, Wright's conception of the notion of *missio Dei*. In this analysis, the strengths, and weaknesses of his conception of this notion will allow us to consider a balance.

## **CHAPTER 4: MISSIO DEI ACCORDING TO WRIGHT**

### **4.1 Introduction**

Wright's (2012) approach to the notion of mission Dei is at the central focus in this work. His approach, in his book *The Mission of God* although not based on the Latin term "*missio Dei*," deserves great consideration in all debates on the concept. In this chapter, analysis is on the notion of *missio Dei* in Wright's view. His conception of the *missio Dei* is brought out, as the researcher's personal position is offered. At the same time, the strengths and weaknesses of Wright's approach are identified.

### **4.2 Christopher Wright's Theory of missio Dei**

This section systematically highlights Wright's position on the notion of *missio Dei* as evoked in the first chapter of the current study. Wright's conception of *missio Dei* is implicitly understood in some of his works (Wright 2011). However,

the book he has devoted more pages to explain his broad and relevant conception is *The Mission of God* (Wright 2006:581). The work will be studied in depth to present the essence of Wright's understanding of the concept of *missio Dei*. To understand him on the notion the reading of *The Mission of God* becomes unavoidable. It is through this summary that I will attempt to highlight the essence of what Wright understands by *missio Dei*.

#### **4.2.1 Genesis and development of the concept missio Dei**

Wright (2012) developed his conception of the *missio Dei* in his above-mentioned book. Volume of 692 pages. In the volume he organized his ideas into four parts. In the first part, entitled "The Bible and the Mission", comprised of two chapters, he denounces the classical conception that privileges particular passages as the biblical basis of the mission. Rather, he proposes a "missionary foundation" of the Bible that of God's mission. To this end, he justifies his approach by what he calls the "missional hermeneutics" of the entire Bible. The second, "The God of Mission," developed in three chapters, Wright supports biblical monotheism by emphasizing God's uniqueness and willingness to make himself known as YHWH, the one God who has revealed himself in Israel and in Jesus Christ.

The third, "The People of Mission," in six chapters, and revolves around the people God has chosen in history to achieve his goal of making himself known to his creature and freeing them from the grip of sin. Election, redemption, alliance and ethics are the key terms developed for this purpose.



Finally, the fourth part, "The Theatre of Mission", composed of the last three chapters of the book, largely recounts the scene of God's mission in the world that considers the earth, and humanity in all their creative, cultural and relational dimensions, hence the universality of God's mission which involves his people in his mission according to the testimony of the two Testaments.

#### **4.2.2 Christopher Wright's Theological Thoughts**

Wright begins with an introduction in which he traces the key elements of his vocation for mission from his childhood to the design of his book. He calls into question the title of the course "The biblical foundation of mission" that he himself dispensed and proposes instead a "missional foundation of the Bible" (Wright 2012:12). By this, he means that the whole Bible is based on the fact of God's mission. He redefines certain missiological terms where he showed three levels of dissatisfaction with the classical use of the term "mission."

He shows his dissatisfaction, first, with the classical definition of "mission" in Christian circles that he considers anthropocentric. Wright states that he is dissatisfied with "the common use of the term "mission" to refer only to human efforts of a diverse nature" (Wright 2012:13). To this end, he gives an alternative definition of the term mission. He proposes to extend the definition of mission to include the notion of God's mission. He will henceforth use "mission" in the general sense of a long-term purpose or goal, whether achieved or attained through near objectives and planned actions" (Wright 2012:13). Commenting on Wright's thinking, Wall points out that "debates have often revolved around the

Church's missionary enterprise, fostering anthropocentric approaches" (Wall 2014:41). Yet the mission, in the first place, is not what men can do by being sent to go far away as Latin etymology seems to mean. Rather, it is "an intention, a will and a divine action" (Nussbaumer 2014:21).

Next, Wright's second dissatisfaction is the mission's emphasis on the Latin root "*mitto*" (send) (Wright 2012:13). He approaches the mission in a global way from a theocentric perspective. Wright upended trends and placed theocentrism at the center of the mission that took over the ecclesiocentric mission. Indeed, the mission of God's people, according to Wright, is a "participation determined as the people of God, following God's initiative and commandment, to the mission of God himself, through the history of God's world, for the redemption of God's creation" (Wright 2012:13). Wright bases the mission on divine action. With him, the mission must no longer be "like a program, a ministry of the Church largely limited to specialists, which happens at a distance" (Wall 2014:41). Nussbaumer understood Wright's thinking by stating that "this is a very broad concept, encompassing a primary objective, a primary intention, and a series of actions that contribute more or less directly to its realization" (Nussbaumer 2014:20). Wright does not completely reject the traditional conception of mission. Rather, he gives an approach that can be identified with "points of convergence and divergence" with the latter (Wall 2014:43).

Then, in addition to the term "mission," Wright evokes the caricatural connotation that the term "missionary" arouses today, following decolonization

(Wright 2012:14). Moreover, he believes that nowhere in the Old Testament is there any question that Israel has been given a mandate to go to the nations or to send missionaries among the nations. Therefore, in his analysis, he will avoid the use of the term. Instead of the term "missionary," he proposes to use the neologism of "mission" (Wright 2012:13).

Finally, after defining missiology as the science of mission, Wright demonstrates that the use of the word "mission" would be more useful and appropriate than the words "missionary" or "missiological" in his approach to mission (Wright 2012:16).

#### **4.2.3 Wright's Missional Hermeneutics**

##### **4.2.3.1 Scope of missional hermeneutics**

We cannot understand Wright's notion of *missio Dei* outside of the missional hermeneutics he developed. He wants the Church to try to see how, throughout the pages of the Bible, God walks through history, leaving the traces of mission at every road sign (Wright 2012:14). The whole Bible tells the story of God's saving action in this sense, for Wright, mission is the main subject of the Bible, because the whole Bible revolves around the person of Christ. Wright cautions and asserts that this does not mean that Jesus of Nazareth will be found implicitly or explicitly in every verse of the Bible (Wright 2012:23). He emphasizes the missional basis of the Bible as the classical conception that revolves around the biblical foundation of mission. He describes how the words

of Jesus in Luke 24 necessitate a messianic and missional reading of the holy scriptures (Wright 2012:21-23).

For Wright, the person and work of Jesus are the main essential hermeneutic key to the overall understanding of the Bible. He asserts that "Christ constitutes the hermeneutic matrix for our reading of the Bible" (Wright 2012:23). Wright sets out in search of a missional hermeneutics to prove its importance in the development of a biblical theology of mission. His purpose is to address a shortcoming in the approach of some contemporary authors who rely exclusively on the New Testament to support the biblical foundation of Christian mission, while setting aside the Old Testament in their approaches (Wright 2012:25).

Wright makes several arguments to support his understanding of God's mission. First, he proposes an overtaking of the biblical foundations for mission because theology on the biblical foundations of mission came to fight those who affirmed on theological and biblical bases that mission to nations is not necessary, thus questioning the validity of Matthew 28. 19 - 20. And yet, for William Carey (1792), this passage of Matthew was clearly a basic text for the mission which he considered as the great commission (Kavunkal n.d). From Carey, all the defenders of the mission relied on this passage of Matthew 28, which is not the only text on which the mission must be based. Wall's article in the book Bible and Mission gives a better understanding of the subject. (Wiher 2012:48-58).

Wright thus rejects the use of a text as a pretext. For him, "to say that the scope of the Bible, or its essential message, is "mission," requires much more than a nice list of Bible verses" (Wright 2012:29). He refuses to base the mission simply on the great imperatives like Matthew 28. 19 - 20, neglecting the biblical codes present throughout the Old Testament, as having real authority for mission. Based on his missional hermeneutics, Wright maintains that the entire Bible is missional. Thus, the mission would be more than "*missio*" (sending), for in the Old Testament there is no such mandate to send intrinsically to Israel.

Second, Wright aligns with James Brownson's approach (Wright 2012:33), which considers that in hermeneutics "the plurality of interpretation is an inevitable reality." Indeed, in these diversities, the Gospel allows us to move forward in coherence and remains the nucleus and common element for all interpretations. Brownson limits his hermeneutic coherence to the New Testament while Wright goes further and encompasses the entire Bible. From the perspective of hermeneutic coherence, he asserts that "the history that *leads* to Christ (messianic interpretation) and the history that *flows* from Christ (missional interpretation) must be taken into account" (Wright 2012:35).

Third, Wright goes beyond the terms "contextual theologies" and "oriented readings" and proposes a missional hermeneutic that necessarily is an "interested" hermeneutic. From this approach he asserts that a missional hermeneutic has a liberating dimension because the Bible speaks of God's mission for the liberation of Man. Wright therefore declares that the mission is Trinitarian and belongs to God (Wright 2012:35). Fourth, Wright's apologetics is

developed against the postmodernist approach. He opposes postmodern hermeneutics. According to Wright, postmodernism rejects the existence of a single truth encompassing all existence and regards this as oppression and power gain (Wright 2012:39).

There is cultural plurality, and at the same time there is an objective truth in the Gospel that concerns everyone. Our theology and mission can therefore be rooted in the mission of God, His person and His work. For Wright, there is nothing better than missional hermeneutics of the Bible characterized by its cultural multiplicity, its local, relational and narrative aspects, traits that postmodernity does not necessarily deny. Wright further asserts that "the Bible remains the single reference, history par excellence" (Wright 2012:42). This is where the divergence between missional hermeneutics and postmodernity lies (Wright 2012:42).

#### **4.2.3.2 Wright's thought on the Latin term "missio Dei"**

The researcher linked *mission Dei* concept in connection with Wright's according to the Latin term. *Missio Dei* is to be substantially understood as God on a mission according to Wright (Wright 2012:60). In the section the title of "God on a mission" Wright wants to demonstrate that the mission belongs to God as Nussbaumer pointed out: "The mission is therefore first of all that of God, it is the *missio Dei* which sets the main objective and the intermediate steps" (Nussbaumer 2014:20). Wright spoke in less than three pages about God's mission from the Latin term.

Nevertheless, he acknowledges that the term "*missio Dei*" has a long history that has had its ups and downs before gradually stabilizing from Karl Barth through Karl Hartenstein, George Vicedom to all the spectrums of Christian theology today. He was not too interested in proving by the Latin term, the Trinitarian nature of the mission. He seems to assume that the reader would be aware of this historical reflection or even, the concept is a given that he hardly needs to use technical language in Latin (Wall Interview 2015). What interests him is to prove through missional hermeneutics that the whole Bible is missional and constitutes a story carried out by God himself who proves that at every stage of the mission, God is there, then plans, sends, and directs those He involves in his mission beginning with Israel, through the prophets, Jesus and the Apostles to continue with the Church today. He rather focused on another aspect of the debates around the term, relying on the notion, but translated in an accessible language, such as the "mission of God" (Wright 2012:60-61).

All his concern revolves around the origin of the mission. According to Wright, if the mission belongs to our God and not to the Church and that we can prove that God rather has a Church for His mission and not a mission for His Church, it does not mean that the Church has no mission as some have thought. The Church has a mission defined as a participation primarily implying that God Himself is on a mission so that humanity, Israel, and the Church can in turn be on a mission with God (Wright 2012:60-62). Wright (2012:66) insists that:

The mission, of course, involves some organization and deliberate action on our part. But from the biblical point of view, mission is not

primarily something that depends on us or belongs to us. Mission, for us, means resolute participation of God's people in God's purposes for the redemption of the entire creation. The mission belongs to God. What is great is that God invites us to be a part of it.

As part of missional hermeneutics, Wright proposes that the entire biblical text be read in light of God's plan for the whole creation and humanity, the election of Israel and its purpose, from the Christological perspective and missional mandate received by the Church (Wright 2012:66-67). Nussbaumer summed up Wright's thinking in these terms: "The term mission, therefore, first refers to God at work in a story that he masters, and which is oriented for the purpose of self-communication" (Nussbaumer 2014:21).

#### **4.2.4 Missional hermeneutics grid of the Bible**

Wright went through the entire Bible, with a particular focus at the Old Testament. Based on exegesis and missional hermeneutics, he developed his approach and asserts that the whole Bible is missional. Wright did not like the term "sending" in divine processions. In fact, this movement of sending is present in the mission of God and in that of those he sent.

##### **4.2.4.1 Missional Dimension of Biblical Monotheism**

Israel's faith was essentially monotheistic (Wright, 2012:74). In all Hebrew texts, the presence of the uniqueness and universality of YHWH is very remarkable. Wright demonstrates here what helped Israel to know God and the strategy used to make Israel known to other nations. For Wright, God's mission is



summed up in the fact that YHWH, the one and true living God, wants to make himself known to all humanity whose invitation to his people in history can align in the same order of mind (Wright 2012:73-74).

The main means that God deploys to make himself known are deeds and words expressed through the experience of His grace or judgment. It is in the experience of God's grace that Israel was able to experience YHWH through the Exodus, as incomparable, sovereign and unique, and through the experience of His grace manifested upon the return from exile. Sending into exile, from the perspective of the mission, according to Wright, has a theocentric motivation but also missional because Israel accomplished a real mission there (Wright 2012:76-110). God acted in an invisible and audible way through the presence of his people in exile.

God decides to make himself known in a visible way through the incarnation of His Son Jesus Christ. The relevance of the missional dimension of Jesus' work was developed in a biblical foundation of the divinity of Jesus Christ. It demonstrates that Jesus embodies the identity and mission of YHWH. The incarnation of Jesus would, therefore, be a self-revelation of God in his own mission. God's mission in Jesus is, therefore, exercised in identical terms. YHWH is Creator, King, Judge and Savior. The same titles are attributed to Jesus in the New Testament (1 Co 8. 6; Col 1. 15 - 20; 3. 1; Rev 1. 5; Ps 110; Mt 25. 31; Rm 2. 16; Rev 7. 10). Jesus' mission is therefore to fulfill that of YHWH (Wright 2012:131). As a result, Wright asserts that "biblical monotheism implies a constant Christological struggle" (Wright 2012:141).

This biblical and Christocentric monotheism is highly missional, because, on the one hand, it affirms "that YHWH is God up in heaven and down on earth, and there are no others; and on the other hand, that Jesus is Lord, and that there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Wright 2012:143). It is this truth of monotheism that is the strength of the Church's witness in the world. Wright points out that monotheism occupies a crucial place in God's mission. He constantly insists on the missional nature of biblical monotheism through missional hermeneutics. He argues that:

First, biblical monotheism is missional because of God's will to make himself known as God; secondly, because of the continual struggle in which biblical monotheism has always found itself, and continues to be today; finally, because biblical monotheism ultimately elicits worship and praise, which are deeply missional activities, at least in this world (Wright 2012:137).

The relevance of monotheism in God's mission is also characterized by its opposition to idolatry among nations (Wright 2012:148). Idolatry is contrary to God's plan in his creation. For him, this question of idolatry is the central element that motivates God to invite the Church to participate in His mission. Creatures and works made of hands of Men that were neither to be compared to the living God (1Sa 17.46) nor to be worshipped by Men (1Co 10.20; Mt 4.10) (Wright 2012:161), have substituted God in the mentality of Men.

In this sense idolatry becomes a mission problem and the Church is invited to "work with God to denounce the idols that continue to blur this fundamental distinction, and to free men and women from the destructive illusion maintained by these idols" (Wright 2012:183). Wright, in evoking the Church's participation in God's mission, continues to emphasize the theocentric

dimension of mission. In inviting the Church to fight against idolatry, he further asserts that: "It is God who fights for us; it is not us who fight for him. We are called to testify, to fight, to resist, to suffer. But the battle belongs to the Lord as does the final victory" (Wright 2012:199).

#### **4.2.4.2 Agents of God's mission**

Genesis 3 to 11 describes how the blessing related to the creature was corrupted after the fall. God thus gives himself a mission. The primary purpose of this missionary mandate of God "is to restore all that humanity seems to want to destroy and to save humanity itself from the consequences of its own folly" (Wright 2012:139). Abraham and Israel were the primary means. People of God is thus created and mandated for God's mission to restore humanity and creation. We can thus express it in terms of the missional dimension of the election. Abraham's mission was characterized by faith and obedience, and that of the people implied their faithfulness to the ethical requirements of the covenant. God is the initiator of this mission of restoration. He wants to bless all the nations of the earth by choosing to involve Man. The restoration of the corrupt blessing culminated in the work of Christ, no longer for Abraham and Israel alone, but for all the nations of the earth (Wright 2012:215-251). This suggests that God's mission is both universal and special (Wright 2012:252-302).

Almost every step of the way in his reading of missional hermeneutics, Wright evokes the affiliation of mission to God first, before it is ours. These

missional glasses allowed him to affirm that: "God's mission is affirmed in an exceptionally clear and insistent manner throughout the story of the Exodus" (Wright 2012:316). Through missional hermeneutics, Wright discovers that the biblical story of the Jubilee has a holistic significance for the mission. He insists that this holistic mission still belongs to God first before it is ours. God's mission is holistic because his message comes from the revelation of God contained throughout the Bible. The Christian mission cannot therefore be integral unless it is based on the entire Bible (Wright 2012:354). In addition, the author sees the cross as the stamps of the Jubilee in the New Testament. Since the cross was "the mandatory price of God's mission" (Wright 2012:365), it is of equal importance that this cross be "the compulsory heart of our mission" (Wright 2012:365). Without a holistic theology of the cross, it would be difficult for the Church as a whole to achieve a holistic mission (Wright 2012:365-366). Here Wright introduces us to the missional dimension of redemption.

Wright continues his thinking in the field of ecology. He believes that God's covenant with Noah has a missional ecological dimension. In Exodus 19:4-6 we discover, following a missional interpretation, that the priesthood of God's people has "a missional function that is in line with the continuity of the Abrahamic election, and which affects the nations" (Wright 2012:386). Furthermore, missional hermeneutics of Leviticus 26:11-13 enables us to understand the missional scope of the temple. The mandate of the New Covenant is explicitly missionary. Its connection to the Old Testament is evident in Matthew 28:18-20, where the elements of the Old Testament are brought out,

namely that: authority belongs to the King, the alliance requirement and the promises of blessing. The missionary order includes the proclamation of the extended covenant to the world and represents the missional dimension of the covenant according to Wright.

The words election (choice), redemption (repurchase) and covenant are key words between the history of Israel and God who plans to bless all the nations of the earth. To these words is added the biblical teaching on ethics, the fourth missional dimension, which can, and even had to be read with, missional hermeneutics, the very core subject of this work. Wright believes that "there can be no biblical mission without biblical ethics" (Wright 2012:418). Ethics, in fact, works together with election, redemption, covenant, both for Israel and for the Church today (Wright 2012:417-418). God's mission is to bless nations through an elected, saved community (Gen 18:19), which maintains an alliance relationship with God expressed in a holy life for His mission (Ex 19:4-6). "The ethical quality of the life of God's people is the vital link between his calling and his mission" (Wright 2012:432). For Wright, the ethical life of the believer is an integral part of his testimony in the world that belongs to God. It is for this reason that he can say: "The world will see no interest in our assertions about our invisible God, no matter what we may say of His concern when we pray, if the world sees no difference between the lives of those who affirm these things and that of others" (Wright 2012:445). Wright adds and defends the idea that "God is the owner of the world" (Ex 19:5) (Wright 2012:434). He himself initiates election, redemption, covenant and encourages his people to a life of ethics

among nations. The ethical dimension in mission is an important feature in Wright's thinking. That is why we can notice that he has devoted a whole book to this subject (Wright 2007).

#### **4.2.4.3 Universality of God's mission**

So far Wright has spoken to us about biblical monotheism and mission, the election of Israel, its redemption by God, its alliance relationship with God, and the ethics that Israel and the Church can nurture for God's mission to nations. He reminds us that "Israel's mission was to live as a people of God, in the territory of God, for the glory of God" (Wright 2012:462). The mission today goes beyond the Israelite borders and affects humanity and the entire earth. For "all that God has done for Israel, in Israel and by Israel was the ultimate goal of blessing all nations within humanity and ultimately the redemption of all creation" (Wright 2012:463).

According to Deuteronomy 10.14, everything belongs to the Lord. God's mission touches all creation. Thus, the characteristics of our missional efforts were to foster an "openness to the world that belongs to God; respect for God's image in man and humility before God and moderation in our affirmations and answers to others" (Wright 2012:534). Wright is convinced that "the main foundation of a biblical missiology must be God's mission" that seeks the knowledge of God through all his creation. God's mission, in his eschatological optimism, also aims at "the day when nations would unite with Israel to form one people and one identity" (Wright 2012:590).

I do not detect any missionary mandate in the Old Testament, on a large scale compared to the New Testament. With Wright, I find "no explicit command ordering the Israelites to go to the nations and exercise that role there" is to proclaim to the nations the Good News of YHWH (Wright 2012:593). However, "from the perspective of the Old Testament, the mission to the nations is an eschatological act of God that does not (yet) constitute a missionary mandate for the people of God" (Wright 2012:594). The centripetal impulse of the mission is clearly stronger than the centrifugal momentum in the Old Testament. On the other hand, both seem to be of equal importance in the New Testament (Wright 2012:619).

#### **4.3 Strengths and weaknesses of Wright's approach**

Several reviews of Wright's book enabled me to better immerse myself in the richness of the book. However, I fully agree with Jacques Nussbaumer who observed that "...on the whole, from an evangelical point of view, it seems very difficult to find in this book places of significant disagreement" (Nussbaumer 2014:18-19). His observation does not mean that Wright's approach to *missio Dei* is perfect or accepted by all. In this last section of the chapter, I will examine the values and inadequacies of Wright's approach to the concept of *missio Dei*.

##### **4.3.1 Strengths of Wright's approach on the notion of missio Dei**

Work is a reference book because of the abundance of words and pages that it is comprised of. Nussbaumer speaks of "a great generosity in words and pages, an easy reading", an affirmative tone without controversy, "laudatory in front of

the beauty of God's work that he unveils" (Nussbaumer 2014:17). However, I will not limit myself to the form of the author's work. What is of interest in this work is the relevance of his approach to the notion of *missio Dei*.

#### **4.3.1.1 Missional hermeneutics**

In a review of Wright's work, Chandler finds that one of the strengths of Wright's approach lies in his missional hermeneutics, which presents a good chord of coherence in the canon used by evangelicals (Nussbaumer 2014:17). If the whole Bible is missional where we are presented with the story of God's mission, it assumes that all Christians can understand what God's mission really is by simply reading and meditating on their Bible. Understanding God's mission will no longer be reserved only for the missiologist. John Stott supports this idea when he asserts that biblical hermeneutics is "the science of scripture interpretation" (Stott 1995:178). He adds that hermeneutics is not only the problem of exegesis specialists, but a matter of all Christians who read the Bible and wish to have a better understanding of it (Stott 1995:178). There is therefore nothing more to reproach Wright, for he motivates the Church to a missional reading of the Scriptures, a reading whose consequences could be the Church's integral commitment to God's mission.

In addition, the author has been cautious in his definition of missional hermeneutics. He points out that the biblical foundation is applicable to several subjects such as marriage, work, etc. However, this possibility does not make these themes legitimate to the point of considering them as a key to reading the



entire Bible as is the case with the mission (Wright 2012:21). I agree with Wright that the scriptures today need to be read from a missiological perspective. It is, therefore, necessary to develop robust missiological hermeneutics. The view is supported according to which every effort made in the various theological disciplines, if it does not converge towards the mission of God's people in the world, becomes an unbalanced theology. I think that missiology needs biblical sciences. At the same time, I think they have no other mission than to be in the service of the mission.

#### **4.3.1.2 Delimitation of Wright's field of reflection**

Wright, ecclesiastically and temporally, limited his debate to the evangelical movement and in the contemporary era. Theologically, he focused on several aspects of the debate related to the mission in the present and among evangelicals. He is limited in these areas because he finds that evangelical Christians still ignore the subjects of fundamental debates in missiology. He points out that even the intra-evangelical dialogues expressed in the documents of the Lausanne movement still elude the knowledge of many Christians.

Wright, therefore, deserves recognition because he tries to stimulate "evangelicals to become aware of the ongoing missiological debates" (Wall 2014:38). Wright makes innovations and approaches to solutions to the current debates, although it costs him criticism. I agree with McTair Wall that his approaches are excellent, original and his contribution to evangelical reflection

on mission is major (Wall 2014:38). Wright's initiative is acceptable, as it influences the researcher's position. This is because evangelicals are the target in terms of the implications of Wright's approach.

#### **4.3.1.3 Wright's contribution to evangelical theology**

It is noteworthy that Wright first considered the mission in the entirety of the Scriptures contrary to what evangelicals, since William Carey, did not do and remained almost bounded on Matthew 28:18-20 (Wright 2012:26-30). Next, Wright addresses the problem that the modernist post-world vision poses to the classical understanding of mission (Wall 2014:39-40); he also addresses the problem between evangelicals about the holistic dimension of mission or the question of priority between social action and evangelism (Wall 2014:40-41).

Anthropocentric approaches to mission, contrary to the theocentric approach, are all problems that prevail among evangelicals that Wright has addressed through analyses and approaches to solutions using missional hermeneutics of the Scriptures (Wall 2014:43). One could add that Wright, on the basis of the missional dimension of ethics, has emphasized social justice as an integral part of God's mission (Chandler n.d.). In addition, his emphasis on the missional dimension of the whole Bible can be raised. He tried to solve the above-mentioned problems in his own way. On top of that, he also awakened the consciences of evangelicals to continue the debates. He therefore deserves the title of tenor for having been the first evangelical, from this angle, to put his subjects on the table of debates.

Finally, Wall notes that by putting Wright's work in the context of the missiological debates we have just explained, it "can help the reader to better nuance the author's words on the notion of mission, mission of God and hermeneutics of missiological. This illumination will then allow us to situate Wright's contribution" (Wall 2014:38). In other words, he proposes to read Wright "from the fundamental perspective of divine mission, as the common thread of the biblical narrative and the history of salvation" (Wall 2014:42). Indeed, Wright's work has awakened minds about the relationship between missiology and biblical sciences. His approach can elicit a certain commitment from evangelicals not only in search of missional hermeneutics, but also in a thorough reflection on the involvement of intertextuality in the mission. This is the essence of the richness of Wright's work on the mission that is mentioned in this work. There is room for discovery as per the reader. However, Wright's approach to the concept of *missio Dei* is not so perfect that some inadequacies can be noted.

#### **4.3.2 Weaknesses of Wright's approach to *missio Dei***

In four large parts, Wright develops an approach on missional hermeneutics, on a God who reveals himself through His own mission, on people who are the subject of this mission and finally the field in which this mission takes place. In subsequent section, it is demonstrated how he missed this in his volume regarding some important elements for understanding the notion of *missio Dei*.

#### **4.3.2.1 Low presence of past debates on the notion of *missio Dei***

Wright's bias great bias in his integration into the theological world is admitted. Theological world means the set of theological reflections from the different branches of Christianity: Catholic, ecumenical, Protestant, evangelical theology, etc. Wiher notes that "Wright refers little to older or recent debates around *missio Dei*. He simply presents his own conception of the "mission of God" (Wiher 2014:12). Wright is an evangelical and he wanted his reflection to contribute to the development of theology within the evangelical movement and, to correct certain conceptions of mission, while innovating perspectives. Wall states: "To fully appreciate Wright's work, I think it is important to put it in the context of the ongoing debates within the evangelical movement" (Wall 2014:38). It is noted that Wright's definition of mission poses a problem for those who do not include it in the current intra-evangelical debates. In my view, this is evidence of the bias of his approach. It is also understood that his initiative to contribute exclusively to the advancement of evangelical theology is at the root of the weak presence of past debates on the notion of *missio Dei* in his approach. Finally, Wright's design alone does not provide a complete understanding of the concept of *missio Dei*. However, evangelicals also need to be informed about the historical debates on the *missio Dei* to complete their appreciation of the notion.

Wright rejects the common use of the term "mission" which seems to have too much anthropocentric connotation. For him, God's mission is a priority. Wright fights-against the ecclesiocentrism of the mission only in the evangelical

context. He proposes that God's mission be put back at the center, to which that of the Church derives (Wright 2012:13). He also points out his dissatisfaction with the use of the Latin term "*missio*" which puts all the dynamism of the mission into "sending" (Wiher 2014:13). It is true that Wright does not "question the classical notion of mission as the proclamation of the Gospel in words and deeds, nor the notion of "sending" (Wall 2014:42). However, for me, it is not easy to fully understand Wright's approach if we are not informed of past debates. The theological deviation from the *missio Dei* concept that made the mission ecclesiocentric does not have its origin in the evangelical movement. However, raising this issue would benefit the reader new to the field of *missio Dei*. However, it must be acknowledged that Wright seems to be aiming for a rather sophisticated readership. Certainly, sending is not the only aspect of the mission. But, at a time when the French word "mission" with same orthography in English word "mission" are all derived from this Latin root "*missio*" (sending) or "*mitto*" (send), I think it would be better to build any approach of the mission on the term "matrix" to remain in the idea of continuity of debates.

Bowen helps us to better understand that Wright is wrong to express dissatisfaction with the classic use of the term "sending" in debates around God's mission. He specifies that the movement of sending is revealed both in the creation and in the incarnation of the Son (Bowen 2007:11-12). These two subjects (creation and incarnation) are also inescapable in the Bible and in Wright's reflection (Wright 2012:111-143). Although he preferred to go beyond the language of sending by broadening the scope of research in order to bring

forth new varieties of ideas that could enrich the biblical theology of mission in the evangelical context (Wright 2012:111-143), the fact remains for him to build a bridge between the debates of the past and the new ideas he wished to present. Yet he understood that a good mission theology cannot be built from the New Testament without recourse to the Old Testament. To this end, he speaks of a hermeneutic coherence that clearly demonstrates that the two Testaments are interdependent in the development of a biblical theology of mission (Wright 2012:33-35). Wiher also made this observation when he believes that "Wright's approach emphasizes aspects of continuity between the Old and New Testaments" (Wiher 2014:13) although the elements of discontinuity in both Testaments have been overlooked in his approach (Wiher 2014:13). However, for theological debates, this discontinuity appears to be the very fruit of his work.

#### **4.3.2.2 Confused use of the concept**

Wright uses the same term "mission" to designate Church. In doing so, he is reusing the classical definition. He also asserts that "our mission stems from, and is part of, God's mission." This statement gives the impression of the existence of several missions. Aisi asserts that "mission is to God" (Wright 2012:66) and uses the possessive adjective "our" to design the Church's participation in God's mission can be confusing. We think it would be desirable to find another form of the word to distinguish and make understanding easy. Nussbaumer also notes a confusion of words and concepts in his approach. He

points out that there may be a "risk of confusion between realities that can be covered by the same mission term without overlapping each other" (Nussbaumer 2014:23).

Wright did not mention "the distinction between what is the agent and the principal" (Nussbaumer 2014:23). He includes under the term "mission" and the approach risks "missing the balance and subtlety of the biblical text" (Nussbaumer 2014:23). Also, Wright's description of missional hermeneutics should allow the reader to be sensitive "to the nuances and distinctions within the concept of mission. However, it is the determinants of these differences that lack clarity in Wright's work" (Nussbaumer 2014:23). Wiher agrees and notes that Wright's approach to "mission is 'inclusive', not distinguishing between cultural mandates and classical missionaries. His conception of the mission thus becomes very broad at the risk that everything will become a mission and that finally nothing will be mission" (Wiher 2014:13). David Bosch suggests that there be a distinction "between *mission* (singular) and *missions* (plural). The first relates to *missio Dei* (God's mission), [...]. Missions (*missiones ecclesiae*: The Church's missionary projects)" (Bosch 1995:22). Wiher believes that this form is already official in the English-speaking world (Wiher 2009:1). If Wright uses this terminology in the English connotation, translators should comply to avoid confusion. On the other hand, we believe that French-speaking missiologists can adopt it for French.

#### **4.3.2.3 Controversy of the hermeneutic key**

The first point to be emphasized from Wright's thinking on the hermeneutics key is the definition of theological hermeneutics that he did not mention in his approach. The word "hermeneutics" is not defined and specified by Wright as it is for the word mission. However, Wright could have first defined the word "hermeneutic" before using it in conjunction with his new term "missional." Indeed, hermeneutics is a process that allows a comprehensive study based on the rules or principles by which an interpretation takes place (Corley 2002:58). According to Paul Ricoeur, the term "hermeneutics" can be defined as "the science of interpretation" (Ricoeur 1969:311). In addition, he sees the path of hermeneutics as a "renouncement of the facilities of the immediate" (Blocher 1976:25). Henri Blocher considers the term "interpretation" evoked by Ricoeur and further says that: "...to interpret is to express the senses in a way and in a language that facilitates its understanding. The interpretation will be faithful if the expressions, in both languages, are fair" (Blocher 1976:53). Packer (1978:8) wrote that:

In the strict sense, hermeneutics is the theory that aims to explain how we achieve understanding; as such, it focuses its attention on the human subject. But the term hermeneutics is commonly used to designate the theory of the interpretation of biblical texts; as such, it focuses its attention on the scriptures themselves. [...] interpretation has been defined as a way of reading an ancient book in such a way as to make it appear relevant to modern man. We therefore define biblical hermeneutics as the study of the theoretical principles involved in this highlighting of the relevance of the Bible and its language in our time.

In short, biblical hermeneutics is a method that aims at bringing the believer to a better understanding of biblical texts to apply it in its true value.



Wright failed to mention this general meaning of the word hermeneutic in his approach, while we think it is important to do so. Wright could also have analyzed the difficulties that theologians had managed on hermeneutics throughout history.

The second point to be mentioned is the absence of the history of theological debates about hermeneutics. To this end, one proposes a brief history of theological hermeneutics which allows to present its connection to Wright's hermeneutic approach and the proof that he could have mentioned it in his book, in order to enrich it.

Wright did not refer to the debates on the issue of hermeneutics. Hermeneutics is not a recent phenomenon. The Greco-Roman Jews, the authors of the NT, the Fathers of the Church, the Medieval period, the time of the Reformation and the post-Reformation, modern times and secular philosophy used hermeneutics for the interpretation of contemporary sacred texts (Packer 1978:56-163). Indeed, hermeneutics have had a long history. It should be remembered that modern hermeneutics has roots in Kant's theories. He considered two levels for knowledge, namely, Empirical knowledge and transcendental knowledge. The basic idea of this biblical interpretation was clearly apologetics (Eskola 1999:57). Hermeneutics has undergone a particular evolution with Rudolf Bultmann (Eskola 1999:63-64) whose approach will be called into question in favor of a "new" hermeneutics defended by Ernst Fuchs and Gerhard Ebeling (Thiselton 1986:1). History presents the emergence of different approaches to interpretation such as the intuitive approach, the

scientific approach, and the contextual approach (Padilla 1981:23-29) and the fierce criticism that prevailed over the historical-critical method.

Indeed, the hermeneutic debates in mission theology emerged at a time when the historical-critical method was called into question. Karl Barth, Rudolf Bultmann, Gerhard Maier and Peter Stuhlmacher are essential theologians in these debates. For Barth, "the [historical-critical] method is not completely bad, but it does not care to let the text speak so that the reader in today's Church can hear and be challenged by its message" (Wall 2015:9). Maier, on the other hand, pleaded for its outright replacement because he considered it to be opposed to the Bible, therefore, against the Christian faith. Stuhlmacher will find that the method has instead challenged faith rather than strengthening it. He thus proposes "hermeneutics of consent" (die Hermeneutik des Einverständnisses) (Maier 1977).

This criticism has stimulated some theologians who have thought in the direction of mission and have seen the need to develop hermeneutics that will guide the Church in her way of reading biblical texts for mission. At present, a new horizon is opening up for new hermeneutics recognized in several expressions: "missionary hermeneutics" (Hesselgrave, Bauckham, Wiher); "missional hermeneutics" (Wright et al.) and "Missiological hermeneutics" (Carriker, Redford, Wall) (Wall 2015:8). McTair Wall finds that "missional" neologism has not yet won everyone's trust (Wall 2015:8). Yet Wright advocates missional hermeneutics. When Wright reflected on the possibility of finding a missionary or missiological role in Exodus about Israel, he found that "neither

'missionary role' nor 'missiological role' are appropriate expressions, and therefore that the word 'missional' becomes very useful" (Wright 2012:16). In the end, Wright could not fully state that he was committed to contributing to this broader debate. It is true that he evokes approaches to biblical foundations, contextual hermeneutics, etc., but he ignores these other broader debates that are also relevant (Wall Interview 2015).

Finally, the last remark on the weakness of Wright's approach relates specifically to the controversy generated by the hermeneutic key he proposes for reading biblical texts. Indeed, Wright is not entirely clear on this point: is the mission "a key to reading" or "the key to reading". He seems to say both, but at the same time he acknowledges that there are other keys, such as "messianic" reading. There is probably a lack of nuance on this point, hence the confusion (Wall Interview 2015). One can multiply the reproaches with Nussbaumer's remarks.

Nussbaumer, in following others, "reproaches Chris Wright for the conceptual and methodological weakness of his approach" (Nussbaumer, 2014: 29). He challenges the term "mission" in Wright's hermeneutic system by asking: "Is it really a conceptual framework, or rather a general motive" (Nussbaumer 2014:29). He adds: "In reality, he seems to lack true coherent hermeneutic keys that would allow to speak of missional hermeneutics" (Nussbaumer 2014:29) while Wright supports "mission as a coherent hermeneutic key" of the Bible (Wright 2012:33). Although the mission is the main subject of the Bible according to him, he is still aware that other 'keys' are possible to analyze the

entire biblical narrative. It is a question of messianic reading and its missional involvement that shows that the missional key integrates messianic reading (Wright 2012:21-35).

Nussbaumer notes that "a theme like "The Kingdom of God" could also be a hermeneutic key to scripture reading (Nussbaumer 2014:30). Bauckham suggests the same thing in his book *Bible and Mission. Christian Witness in a Postmoderne World* (Bauckham 2003). It is possible that more can be found. The subject will be discussed in depth further later.

#### **4.3.2.4 Discontinuity in Wright's approach**

Nussbaumer rightly notes that "Wright develops too little of the issues of the articulation between analogy, typology, and direct transfer between the old and the new covenant" (Nussbaumer 2014:30). He bases this on "the continuity aspects between the Old and New Testaments" and discusses less "the discontinuous elements between the two Testaments" (Wiher 2014:13).

According to Mike Gilbert-Smith, the New Testament contains many elements that establish a discontinuity between the two Testaments that he considers having escaped Wright's attention. To this end, he points to the socio-economic and political issue raised by Wright in Exodus. He finds that Jesus insisted on the Church's involvement in politics as an organ living in an entirely political society, contrary to what Wright developed in his analysis of Exodus (Gilbert-Smith n.d:5). Wright is right to bring the mission back from the Old Testament. One notices that the apostles and authors of the New Testament

made great use of the Old Testament in their preaching and writing. I dare say that the New Testament is none other than the fruit of a messianic and missional hermeneutics of the Old Testament. However, no excuse should be made to leave the discontinuity between these two Testaments unnoticed. The fact that we do not find intrinsic imperatives of sending Israel on a mission in the Old Testament as the New Testament mentions, is already a significant discontinuity to consider. Also, the sending of the Church is a continuation of that of the divine processions. However, it must be recognized that the mission of the Church does not continue the redemptive incarnation and work of Christ. Also, the Church does not play the role for which the Holy Spirit is sent on a mission. There is, of course, continuity in these missions on the one hand, but also discontinuity on the other hand.

#### **4.3.2.5 Place of the term "sending" in the theology of the mission**

I mentioned earlier Wright's dissatisfaction with the Latin term "missio" (sending) at the beginning of his book. Wright returns in the last part of his work to show that this term has no place in the Old Testament. "It is only in Isaiah 66 that we find a passage that explicitly speaks of God who sends messengers to the nations, and it is in the context of a future expectation linked to the prior gathering of Israel" (Wright 2012:594). The last part of the statement shows a certain relativism that does not accept the use of the term in the Old Testament as a missionary imperative in the same way as the New Testament. Wright finds that with the Old Testament, it is the centripetal impulse of the mission that is

much more valued and not the centrifugal momentum. He quotes Eckhard Schnabel as saying that it is "difficult" or even "impossible to speak of a universal duty or mandate of Israel" (Wright 2012:594). These arguments led to his indignation at the widespread use of the Latin term "sending."

The Old Testament is not just the centripetal mission. The mission's two impulses (centripetal and centrifugal) must work together. Wiher notices a strong presence of the Hebrew verb "xl;v" (*shālah*) "send" in the Old Testament and "avposte,llw " (*apostello*) in the Septuagint, more than in the New Testament although these sending do not directly refer to the mission (Wiher 2012:139-140). He adds that despite this limitation, "the sending of Abraham, Moses, Jonah, Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel (Gen 12:1; Ex 3:10; Jer 1:5-7; Ez 2:3), [...] Joseph, Daniel, Nehemiah, Esther and Others" (Wiher 2012:140), is a reality not to be overlooked in the Old Testament. Wright thinks like a biblist developing a biblical theology of mission, while the notion of *missio Dei*, is a concept that goes beyond a simple biblical theology of mission. It can be said that *missio Dei* encompasses a unified whole. For it concerns both the centrifugal and centripetal dimension of the mission, but also, it needs the input of other theological disciplines to be better understood. Wright's approach does not seem to be God's mission, but part of God's mission that obviously corrects and completes the classic theological errors of this mission, mentioned above.

Wright asserts the absence of imperatives in the Old Testament, unlike Mark Kreitzer who considers Psalm 96:1-3 is the missionary mandate of the Psalms and supports the centrifugal movement in the Old Testament that Wright

and other Old Testament scholars reject. The absence of an explicit presence of the verb "go" is unfounded. Israel cannot proclaim to other nations the uniqueness of YHWH without the movement to go (Kreitzer n.d). For Kreitzer, Israel failed in its centrifugal mission rather than thinking that it did not receive this missionary imperative (1 Peter 2:9-12; Romans 11.) (Kreitzer n.d). One concurs with Kalemba's assertion during the Mission Introductory course that "there is no mission without sending." Although the mission cannot be summed up solely in the notion of sending, it is nevertheless important to recognize its anchor in the biblical theology of mission.

#### **4.3.2.6 Place of the Holy Spirit in *missio Dei***

Finally, I note that even if Wright refers to the notion of *missio Dei* as a Trinitarian foundation, his approach remains unbalanced. Throughout his volume, Wright did not develop a specific point to the mission of the Holy Spirit. This is the element that caught Chandler's attention. For him, the only negative criticism he could make about Wright's approach was the lack of discussion about the missiological implications of the Holy Spirit (Chandler n.d.). Wright wrote a book developing his conception of the Holy Spirit (Wright 2006). From the researcher's point of view, this is not a good excuse to override the missiological implications of the Holy Spirit in this volume dedicated to God's mission. Moreover, he argues in his missional hermeneutics that the notion of *missio Dei* is understood by considering the Bible as a whole. A comprehensive analysis of the Bible on mission cannot dissociate people from the Trinity and

pretend to be global. This part will also be discussed in depth in the next chapter.

#### **4.4 Partial Conclusion**

Wright's, an Old Testament scholar, experienced in practice and in missiological reflection, thinks that the notion of *missio Dei* is not a matter of looking for some biblical passages as the basis for mission. Mission is a phenomenon that is present throughout the Bible. In addition to this remark, Wright does not believe that mission can be limited to a concept. For, the missionary God first exercised his mission among the nations through Biblical monotheism through Israel.

The missionary imperative based on the term "sending" in the New Testament cannot be dissociated from Old Testament indicatives. Mission indicatives, characterized by the terminology of election, redemption, alliance, ethics, etc., associated with the missionary imperative, can enable the mission to be truly *missio Dei*. For this purpose, he proposes missional hermeneutics, made with the help of a missional reading grid of the Bible. Only a hermeneutic grid can develop a reliable biblical theology of mission.

The notion of *missio Dei*, becomes for him, a mission initiated and belonging to God. Not only did Wright stand firm on the fact that the mission is God's initiative, but he also showed that this mission was initiated with a view to restoring all creation and humanity as a whole from the consequences of the fall. He goes further and stresses the vast extent of the *missio Dei*. It transcends geographical, cultural, religious and creative boundaries and touches all that



God has created and put in the cosmos. Invisible beings, visible things and beings, all humanity and each people with their worldview, all belong to God and his mission concerns them all. Wright has insisted that the mission belonging to God and the people of God (Israel and the Church) as participants. Thus, the phrases "everything, together, whole, globality, integral, universal, holistic, etc." are the key terms he used in his perspective of *missio Dei*, in several others of his writings. Wright will write in three of his articles that mission can be exercised by integrating "the whole gospel, by the whole Church, into the whole world" (Wiher 2012:245-310). Indeed, Wright's mission is global and/or universal. It is therefore logical that the participation of God's people in His mission should consider this mission as God intended it.

The introduction of his missional hermeneutics into theological reflection and the apology developed to right the evangelical theology of mission was decisive in the missiological reflections of evangelicals. Wright's contribution, however, does not respond to the understanding of the notion of *missio Dei*. God's mission, viewed in a global vision as Wright points out, seems to logically lead to arguing in favor not for a hermeneutic key of the Bible, but for hermeneutic keys. Poorly discussed concepts followed a weak discussion of the discontinuity of the notion of *missio Dei* in the Bible. Moreover, a mission that encompasses the entire Bible cannot ignore the strong presence of the Latin term "*missio*" (sending) in the Bible. Worse, it is no longer possible to advocate a Trinitarian foundation of mission where the approach does not refer to the Holy Spirit. Criticism of Wright would be diminished if, however, in addition to the

missiological challenges of the evangelicals he referred to, he had referred to past debates on the *missio Dei* concept as well as that of hermeneutics and its theological definition in relation to its missional definition.

The historical study of the notion of *missio Dei* in the first chapter and its analysis in Wright's conception will lead us to an assessment of Wright's approach to the notion of *missio Dei* in my fifth chapter as demonstrated in the first chapter of this study.

## **CHAPTER 5: WRIGHT'S APPROACH TO MISSIO DEI AND ITS MISSIOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS IN BURKINA FASO**

### **5.1 Introduction**

Presently, the Chapter consists of first assessing Wright's weaknesses in light of other approaches. Second, there is discussion of the extent to which Wright's approach can be understood as a contribution to the theology of the Christian mission. Finally, a practical approach to the implications of his approach to the notion of *missio Dei* in the evangelical movement is proposed. As pointed out earlier in these forms, Wright has contributed greatly to the understanding of the notion of *missio Dei* within the evangelical movement. His approach is essential for any reflection that aims to develop a biblical theology of the Christian mission, especially for French-speaking evangelicals. Evidently, this chapter is linked to the statement of the problem and research questions described in the first chapter.

## **5.2 Evaluation of Wright's approach to *missio Dei***

In the previous chapter, Wright's *missio Dei* theory was explained. The present chapter begins with evaluation of his approach. In this chapter, I will evaluate his approach compared to Henri Blocher, David Bosch, Timothy Tennent, Arthur F. Glasser, Lesslie Newbigin, Klaus Bockmuehl, Charles R. Taber, etc.

### **5.2.1 *Missio Dei* as the Trinitarian foundation of the mission**

In his approach, Wright gave little importance to the term "sending" and did little to develop the Holy Spirit's action in the mission. The mention of the Holy Spirit is found in very few pages in the book. Hence, his approach runs the risk of missing a balanced Trinitarian foundation. The term "sending" cannot be removed from the notion of *missio Dei*. Obviously, Wright does not do it entirely. The mission cannot be that of the Triune God without mentioning the role of the Holy Spirit in the mission of the divine Persons. As already seen, Wright does not give the Holy Spirit enough room in his articulation of the *missio Dei*. The terms "Trinity," "sending" and "Holy Spirit" will therefore be my key terms in the argument that follows.

#### **5.2.1.1 Trinity in the Holy Scriptures**

The God who is revealed in the New Testament is a Trinitarian God (Romerowski, 2013:80). "With the word *יְהוָה יחיד* *yāhîd*, one would have the unambiguous assertion that Yahweh is unique, that there is no other god but Him, but it could very well be said of the Triune God" (Romerowski 2013:81).

Wright did develop this aspect of God's uniqueness in the Old Testament (Wright 2012:136-212). However, when the Old Testament demonstrates divine plurality, the subject becomes crucial. The plural form of the name "Elohim" (ʾĕlōhîm) is "often presented as an indication of plurality within the divine being" (Romerowski 2013:82).

Indeed, the trinity's clues are present in the Old Testament. In this divine plurality is the Father, but also the Son and the Holy Spirit. Of course, "if there was no plurality in God, he could not reveal himself without undermining his transcendence" (Romerowski 2013:86). God has been revealed since the time of the Old Testament. "The angel of the Lord" in the Old Testament usually refers to the Son (Romerowski 2013:88). There is no need to repeat it because Wright already affirmed the hermeneutics of the Old Testament is messianic and Christological (Wright 2012:21-22). The Holy Spirit pushes the prophets to prophesy. In doing so, it is God himself who acts (Romerowski 2013:94). Various passages, taken together (Ps 139:7; Is 63:11-14; Hag 2:4ff; Ex 28:3; 1:10. 6; etc.) suggest that the Holy Spirit is a divine being who appears in the plurality of the divine being. It is presumed that the Old Testament was preparing the revelation that was going to be fully completed in the New Testament (Romerowski 2013:97).

The proof by Peter's assertion in Acts 2:16-17 "No, this is what was spoken by the prophet Joel: "In the last days, God says, I will pour out my Spirit on all people" (cf. Joel 2:28-29) can be added. This declaration marks a renewal of the promise made on the Holy Spirit in the Old Testament and establishes a

continuity of the two Testaments about the sending and work of the Spirit in the *missio Dei* (Wall 2012:98). Wright, as an Old Testament scholar, is fluent in these matters. If he does not fairly develop the role of the divine Persons in this Testament, he may certainly have his own well-founded reasons. However, in my view, this is a weakness on his part because writing on the subject of God's mission, regardless of the interest in the Latin term *missio Dei*, the place of the Spirit in this mission remains paramount.

The notion of Trinity is very important in mission and even very important in the Theology of the New Testament. Donald Cobb did research that reveals that the New Testament contains twenty-four verses that deal with the question of the Trinity. To this end, he finds that Romans 15:14-33 is a passage in the New Testament, which presents the divine Persons successively in several verses (Cobb 2013:6). Thus, this passage becomes important for studying the Trinity.

Luke is one of the authors of the New Testament to speak more deeply about the person and work of the Holy Ghost. His Gospel and the Book of Acts of the Apostles help us to understand in an obvious way the inescapable place of the Holy Spirit in the *Missio Dei* Wall declares to this effect that "the Spirit makes all believers the spokesmen of God, the 'prophets'" (Wall 2012:96). He was the strength of the apostles and the builder of God's new people, which is the present Church. He ushered in the era of the new covenant and ensured the permanent presence of the divine Persons in the Church for mission (Wall 2012:99-100). Nothing more interesting to learn that "the Spirit is the divine

person mentioned to carry out the *missio Dei* in this period of the history of salvation" (Wall 2012:112). Although this statement relates to the New Testament and Wright is more interested in the Old Testament in particular, nevertheless, there are still elements to demonstrate his weakness, for his missional hermeneutics concern all scriptures.

#### **5.2.1.2 Trinity among the reformers**

The reformers of the 16<sup>th</sup> century, such as Wesley, Finney, and Luther knew that the command to make disciples through the proclamation of the Gospel concerned them. Nevertheless, they were much more involved in the building of Christians (Leuba, 1982:27-28). Indeed, their theology on the Trinity supports our position in this assessment. For them, two things are to be considered about the mission in the Trinity. On the one hand, the Persons of the Trinity work in unity. On the other hand, each one has a specific role for the salvation of humanity. The reformers were strongly attached to the tradition of the Fathers of the Church and especially to this assertion of St. Augustine: "The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, just as they are inseparable, so they work inseparably" (Augustine in Leuba, 1982:29). This statement supports the Trinitarian nature of the mission among the reformers and helps to show that Wright's approach does not promote the desire to observe a Trinitarian foundation of the mission.

#### **5.2.1.3 Trinity and monotheism**

Wright so convincingly developed monotheism and ignored the doctrine of the Trinity. It seems to me that this may be a cause to call into question the monotheistic character of God at present, especially by Muslims and Jews. Henri Blocher's approach to "Trinitarian appropriations" helps to promote understanding of the need to properly articulate the relationship between Trinity and monotheism. Indeed, according to Blocher, "appropriation serves as a medium term between the exclusive attribution to one of the Persons (which is adequate for personal 'property' such as fatherhood for the Father) and the reference to the 'simple', unique essence, known as said by tradition" (Blocher 2013). The unity and uniqueness of essence in the divine Persons can be confessed to the benefit of monotheism (Blocher 2013:42). Blocher points out four truths that involve Trinitarian appropriations. For the first type of appropriation, he attaches importance to the names used in the New Testament to designate the divine Persons. The word "God" (*theos*) commonly refers to the Father, the word "Lord" (*kurios*) is used to refer to the Son and finally the word "Spirit" (*pneuma*) refers to the third person of the Trinity.

The second type of appropriation concerns "the attributions or perfections that describe the divine essence." The third type of appropriation focuses on external works. For example, in the Apostles' Symbol, "the appropriation of Creation" belongs to the Father. "The appropriation of incarnation and redemption" is attributed to Jesus Christ and "the appropriation of the inhabitation of souls" belongs to the Holy Spirit. All three are actively involved in the external work, but with a clear differentiation of role (Blocher 2013:42).

Finally, the fourth and final type of appropriation supports the possibility of involving the three people of the Trinity in our prayers. The researcher embraces that view. What interests me here is the process. Jesus was clear on the principle of prayer. The Father is addressed in the name of the Son. The role of the Spirit is to guide us in formulating our prayers. The religious and liturgical appropriation attributes to the Father the tributes and adorations. Rather, the Son and the Holy Ghost are considered mediators of worship. "That is why the Church most often addresses her prayers to the Father through the Son in the unity of the Holy Spirit... (Bartmann 195:245). Blocher insists on unity in the mission of divine people by supporting the approach of Irenaeus of Lyon who regarded the Father as the one who gives the order, the Son being the one who obeys and carries out, and finally the Holy Spirit who nourishes and makes grow (Blocher 2013:50).

We can further consider Emmanuel Durand's approach, which draws on Tertullian to assert that "the *trinitarian dispositio* is eternal in God" (Durand 2013:59). Athanasius of Alexandria adds that the fathering of the Son by the Father is an eternal fact (Durand 2013:59). When we consider again that Wright develops God's mission with few words about the role of the Spirit in this mission, then Athanasius' approach in his *Epistolae ad Serapionem*, and then that of Basil of Caesarea in his treatise *De Spiritu Sancto*, are relevant to show from the Holy Scriptures that "following the testimony of his own works, the Holy Spirit is of the same dignity as the Father and the Son, although he is not directly designated as God" (Durand 2013:59).



According to Blocher, the history of theology shows that we cannot separate the sending of people from the Trinity (Blocher 2013:50-55). Emmanuel Durand writes that, in the article of the Symbol of Nicaea about the Spirit, it was decreed that the Spirit is "Lord, which he gives life, that he is jointly worshipped and glorified with the Father and the Son. All these characteristics clearly attest to the divinity of the Holy Spirit, equal to that of the Father and the Son" (Durand 2013:60). Thus, I share Durand's view that "the three divine Persons remain inseparable in their being and in their action" (Durand 2013:60).

These arguments on the relationship between Trinity and monotheism attest with conviction that a mission theology, which considers mission in the broadest sense as Wright did, requires consideration of the Persons of the Trinity in their unity and in their particularity in the *missio Dei*.

#### **5.2.1.4 Holy Spirit as a Missionary Spirit**

Let us begin this part with Francis Anekwe Oborji's assertion that "Hartenstein sees mission not as the responsibility of the missionary or the Church, but as the cause of the Trinitarian God" (Oborji 2006:135). In this statement he announces the impossibility of reflecting on the *missio Dei* without the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. Roger Greenway holds the same view and argues that the expansion of the Holy Spirit "on the day of Pentecost has thus made the Church a missionary Church and it is now impossible to separate the Holy Spirit from the mission" (Greenway 2000:50). Graham Tomlin's approach is still very harsh if we put it at the center of Wright's approach. He first presents the controversy

that has prevailed for centuries in the history of the Church around the Trinity, and in particular the role of the Spirit in this Trinity (Tomlin 2013:99). He argues that:

Theology that ignores this fact will not be able to understand who God is and what he represents—it will be lost in arid definitions and hollow words. It is less a theology of the Spirit that is necessary for us than a theology in the Spirit. Once we take seriously the notion that our only way to access God is to go through the Spirit, then we can conceive of a truly spiritual theology—a theology that, instead of being a subject of academic study, becomes a true search for nature and God's action in the world, a quest as intimately personal as it is intellectually rigorous (Tomlin 2013:116).

It is true that he essentially insists here on the spiritual and intellectual aspect of theology. Nevertheless, his affirmation makes it possible to understand that theology has value only when we develop it by having the Holy Spirit at the center of reflections. In the new covenant, we recognize that the Holy Spirit plays a decisive role. Action verbs such as awake, fill, allow, entice, remove, show, guide, unite, prepare, open, convince, protect, equip, etc. (Greenway, 2000:51-54) are verbs commonly used to describe the work of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer under the new covenant and in the *missio Dei* at this time in the history of salvation. If *missio Dei* is described as a Trinitarian foundation, it assumes that any approach that ignores the place of the Holy Spirit in this divine mission, becomes a kind of theological dualism whatever its theological motivations.

Wright could have further emphasized God's Trinitarian action in his approach because "the 'Economic Trinity' is the gateway to the Ontological Trinity. We must use this path to develop a Trinitarian consciousness within

God's people" (Huser 2013:133). In the manifestation of God's love, the baptism of Jesus, the Cross, the resurrection, ascension, creation, and new creation all present Trinitarian elements. Thus, the conception of God's plan deserves Trinitarian development because it is initiated by the Father, implemented by the Son, refreshed in the world and perfected in the lives of Christians by the Spirit (Huser 2013:133). Lesslie Newbigin, from a Trinitarian perspective demonstrates how the Persons of the Trinity are all involved in the *missio Dei*. In three successive chapters, he develops the Mission of the Father as faith in action, that of the Son as love in action and that of the Spirit as hope in action (Newbigin 1995:30 - 65). For him, Mark 1:1-15 brings out the mission of the three-divine people. We can deduce that Jesus is introduced to it as the one who announces the coming of God's reign, the one who is recognized as the Son of God and the one who was anointed by the Spirit of God. Thus, the mission and person of Jesus reveal the mission of the Triune God (Newbigin 1995:21).

Luke 10:21-22 "has both a missionary and a Trinitarian reach, for the biblical foundation of mission is Trinitarian" (Escobar 2005:102). The purpose of this chapter is to show that a mission theology, apologetic as Wright addressed it, cannot be elaborated without emphasizing the work of divine Persons in their unity and peculiarity, for this distinction does not stand out sufficiently in Wright's work. Escobar seems more balanced when he says that "if, under the special inspiration of the Holy Spirit, Christians regain the sense of the majesty of God the Father, of his power and love, the sense of grace and compassion of Jesus

Christ and the purifying fire of the Holy Spirit, the result is a renewal of missionary vocations" (Escobar 2005:102). One concurs with Oborji who thinks that a good and fair interpretation of the notion of *missio Dei* can help to send a convincing message that "the theological foundation of mission is based on the doctrine of the Trinity. The mission has its origin in God the Father who sends his Son into the world and, in the fact, that the Father and the Son send the Holy Spirit to the Church to continue the saving mission of the same God in the world" (Oborji 2006:135). I conclude this part with these last two authors who, once again, add to the precedents and attest that the notion of *missio Dei* undeniably implies the commitment of the three-divine people in an inseparable dynamism. Wright could have pointed that out in his approach.

### **5.2.2 Possibility of several hermeneutic keys to the scriptures**

Arthur Glasser agrees with Wright and argues that the Bible is a missionary book (Glasser, 2003:17). On this basis, Wright considers the mission to be a hermeneutic key to the Bible (Wright 2012:33). At the same time, he recognizes the existence of other keys to analyzing the entire biblical narrative. This is messianic hermeneutics in addition to the missional hermeneutics that he strongly defends in his work (Wright 2012:21-22, 35). Yet there is no evidence that in Wright's mind, the hermeneutic key can exceed these two. It is noted, however, that in the first chapter of God's Mission, Wright gives an assessment of several types of hermeneutic reading that we can apply to biblical texts and which he wishes to overcome in his approach. That said, Wright is trapped by

his overly categorical use when he speaks of a "hermeneutic key." Jacques Nussbaumer, after a profound analysis of Wright's approach, proposes the theme of the "Kingdom of God" as a third hermeneutic key to scripture reading (Nussbaumer 2014:13).

Richard Bauckham, in his book, *Bible and Mission* (Bauckham 2003:1-24. In Wall, 2015:7), shows this by the importance he attached to the notion of the "hermeneutics of God's reign" instead of "missionary hermeneutics" (Wall 2015:7). Wall goes further by asserting that we can emerge in the Lucanian hermeneutics, a notion that is at the same time theocentric, Christocentric, ecclesiocentric and missiocentric (Wall 2014:13). There is, therefore, a possibility of finding several hermeneutic keys in reading the scriptures. So, we don't need to invent it. Richard Bauckham, in his book, *Bible and Mission* (Bauckham 2003:1-24. In Wall, 2015: 7), proves this by the importance he attaches to the notion of the "hermeneutics of God's reign" instead of "missionary hermeneutics" (Wall 2015:7).

It is pointed out that Wright does not suggest the notion of God's reign as a key. However, one recognizes that he frequently makes use of the concept. For mention of the concept of kingdom/reign can be found on dozens of pages, just on the work of God's mission alone. So, this study goes beyond the limit that Wright seems to impose on the hermeneutic key and follow in the footsteps of Bauckham who suggests that it is possible to read the scriptures from the perspective of God's reign.

### **5.2.2.1 Controversy over the notion of God's reign**

This is a continuation of the previous point. This is a major problem that concerns scholars in the debates that have prevailed in the theology of the Kingdom of God. This is the "already" of the kingdom in Luke 17:21 "We will not say, "Come, he is here," or, "He is there," for, note it well, the kingdom of God is among you" and the "not yet" of the kingdom in Matthew 6:10 "may your reign come..." On the one hand, when we consider that the kingdom is where the King is, the Kingdom becomes a reality in the first coming of the King (Jesus Christ). On the other hand, the fullness of the Kingdom and the ultimate realization of the Kingdom is eschatological (Taber 1984:14). The King is not there but promises a return soon (Rev 22:7).

These arguments support a kingdom on earth. Taber affirms that "Jesus calls us to pray for the coming of his reign; he calls us to demonstrate in our individual and collective life the present reality of this reign, to announce his reign in order to invite foreign persons to the Kingdom, to submit to it, to fight and to suffer for this reign in the world" (Taber 1984:20-21). This statement attests that we are representatives of the Kingdom of God in the world, the "already". But at the same time, we must announce the final establishment of this reign planned for the next return of the King. The kingdom is both present and future and was inaugurated in Jesus, although its consummation is still future (Chester, 2006:134). We can better understand the polemics of the "already" and the "not yet" in the sense that the kingdom came because Christ came, or the kingdom is present because the King is present. After the resurrection and

ascension of Jesus, this presence is ensured by the mediation of the Holy Spirit. The kingdom that was present in and through Christ is not absent. He continues to be present because his disciples represent him on earth through the Holy Spirit (Chester, 2006:141-142).

The conclusion is arrived at that, in this continuity, God's reign is gradually realized on earth, by the fact that men become disciples of Jesus, until Revelation 11:15 is fulfilled. "The kingdom of the world has now passed into the hands of our Lord and His Christ. He will reign forever" (cf. 12.10). For now, "God's reign is still in struggle, in a stage of development" (Bockmuehl 1977:22). Bosch espouses Freytag's idea and stresses that the reign of God is the substance and purpose of the mission (Bosch 1995:677). These last assertions already underscore the idea that the Kingdom of God can also be added to the hermeneutic keys of the Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures further demonstrate this.

#### **5.2.2.2 The Kingdom of God according to the Scriptures**

Wright's thought of mission is to show that the whole Bible fosters us from God's mission. Speaking of the reign of God and the relationship of the two Testaments in this area, Arthur Glasser states that the kingdom of God is one of the central themes of the Bible (Glasser 2003:20). This gives a certain conviction that the kingdom of God can serve as a grid for reading the Bible. In other words, this statement confirms that missional and messianic hermeneutics are not the only keys to reading biblical texts. The theme of the kingdom was

similarly neglected by Wright with regard to the Old Testament teaching about it. We recognize that this theme is more explicit in the New Testament in the same way as sending on a mission. However, as Wright did for the mission, Glasser also did it for the reign of God (Glasser 2003:20). For Glasser, the entire Old Testament traces God's mission to the establishment of his Kingdom. Jesus inaugurates the kingdom, the Spirit inaugurates the Missionary Church which received the mandate of the proclamation of this kingdom (Glasser 2003:183, 259, 269).

Indeed, the teaching of God's reign in the Old Testament is not to be overlooked. It serves as a starting point when we want to fully understand Jesus' teachings on this subject. The Old Testament teaches that God is a King who rules over Israel, over nations and over all creation (1S12:12; Ex 15:18; 2K19:15). The Old Testament also teaches that it is an eternal reign (Ps 145:11, 13) (Djaballah 2004:1408). According to the Old Testament, the ultimate goal of Yahweh's future coming is the establishment of his reign, which will be characterized by "the manifestation and universal recognition of his sovereignty, the triumph of justice, the presence of the shalom the fulfillment of salvation in the world" (Djaballah 2004:1408). John the Baptist proclaimed the reign of God as an intermediate preacher between the old and the new covenant (Mt 3:1) (Djaballah 2004:1409).

Newbigin (1995) relies on God's intention to bless all nations as was Wright's central argument on behalf of the mission. For Newbigin, as for many other authors such as Glasser, Nissen, etc., the entire Bible traces God's



mission that involves his people through history for the establishment of the kingdom of God (Newbigin 1995:31). Therefore, the proclamation of God's reign would not be a new movement (Newbigin 1995:30-34). This statement leads us to believe that the mission exists for the reign of God. It is because God plans the establishment of a kingdom in which he will rule himself that the mission has been made necessary. As one goes through the books of the Old Testament, it becomes clear that the notion of the kingdom of God has a solid biblical foundation. Exodus 19:6: "You will be for me a kingdom of priests, a holy nation" describes the importance of the covenant between Yahweh and the people of Israel. The Psalms and Prophets are not leftover (Bockmuehl 1977:21). The notion of the kingdom of God is even more important in the New Testament. His message was, according to the Gospels, the center of Jesus' preaching (Runia, 1980:8). Klaus Bockmuehl adds and argues that:

The theme of God's kingdom is also manifested throughout the life of Jesus. From the beginning, Jesus announced the Gospel of the Kingdom. After being crucified precisely for this question ("Jesus Nazarenus Rex Iudaeorum"), he speaks of the Kingdom of God with his disciples during the forty days between resurrection and ascension (Acts 1.3). This same Kingdom forms the foundation (Mt 28:18-20; Eph.1:20-22), the content (Mt 24:14) of the preaching of his envoys, until his return (Bockmuehl 1977:21).

The content of the Christian mission is the proclamation of the reign of God. Indeed, the kingdom of God is one of the images that represents salvation. There are like: salvation, reconciliation, justification, deliverance, new creation, etc. However, the Kingdom of God is the preferred image of the authors of the New Testament for three reasons: Jesus himself first considers the coming of the reign as the Good News of the kingdom (Taber 1984:13). Then, in the

Gospels of Matthew, Mark and Luke, the reign of God represents the essence of salvation. Finally, the image of the kingdom encompasses security, health, deliverance, reconciliation, etc. All the evils to which humanity is the victim are directly the result of the original refusal of divine authority (Taber 1984:13). "In a world where condemnation stems directly from disobedience, no salvation is possible without submission to the King's authority. This is why the proclamation of the Kingdom of God is indeed the essence of the Gospel" (Taber 1984:13). It is quite clear in the Bible that the intention of God's reign even precedes his mission. It began in the Old Testament before being inaugurated by Christ, who entrusted it to the Apostles, the disciples, and the Church, which pursues this intention in its mission until its final fulfillment.

#### **5.2.2.3 Kingdom initiated by God and proclaimed by the Church**

The researcher's position of defence of the thesis is that the kingdom belongs to God who involves his Church to announce his current reign and its completion in the future. It has been noticed with Wright and several other authors that the mission belongs to God and not to the Church. For the latter, it was created to participate in God's mission. The same is true of the kingdom of God.

According to Jesus, this kingdom comes from the very heart of God. It is not the result of human activities, but of the work of God himself. God is the initiator, the one who established this kingdom through the activities of Jesus (Runia 1980:9-10). The Church, on the other hand, anticipates the coming of the kingdom. If this is the case, then it seems natural that the Church should serve

this kingdom by calling on the people to take part in the anticipation of this kingdom in the Church. As mentioned in the preceding chapter, the purpose of the mission is not an extension of the Church or the evangelization of the world. The purpose of the Christian mission is to extend the limits of the kingdom of God (Chester 2006:101-102). Francis A. Oborji adds that "human beings are called as Christians to claim the whole world for God, as part of God's reign. The Kingdom of God is therefore the substance and purpose of the mission" (Oborji 2006:139). The Church, from the perspective of the centripetal impulse of mission, must be a community that makes the reign of God visible through its conduct and mission in society. For the ethics that Jesus advocates is an ethic of God's reign and not an ethic of preparation or expectation (Chester 2006:155).

I believe that everything I have been able to demonstrate in previous chapters about the mission, its origin, its functioning, its purpose, etc. apply to the notion of the Kingdom of God. According to Oborji "Mission is not only an obedience to the Lord's command, it is not only the task of assembling a community, it is a participation in the mission of the Son, *missio Dei*, with the ultimate goal of restoring the Kingdom of Christ over all his redeemed creation" (Oborji 2006:140). This statement underlines a truth that indicates that we cannot even reflect on the *missio Dei* in terms of God's mission as a whole without articulating his relationship with the *regnum Dei* (the kingdom of God). In essence, all the efforts made in the mission of the three divine Persons and that of the Church have contributed to the establishment of the kingdom of God and

still contribute to its final establishment according to the time set by the initiator, God. Jesus made it clear so implicitly, in the development of Luke's thought in Acts 1:3-8, the link between the reign of God, expected by the apostles from a Jewish perspective (v. 6) and the order of mission. In this regard, he asserts the Church's responsibility to mission only to care for the coming of the kingdom of God.

The kingdom is not only instituted by God, but it is also vast and touches all the structures of God's mission. So, it is universal. This universality, we can read in the Psalms and the Prophets. Indeed, the Royal Psalms and the message of the prophets emphasize the universality of the Kingdom of God, which is not limited to Israel, but encompasses all nations and all creation. His reign was already decided and established, but the process of settlement was still being completed, for this reign would extend throughout his creation and would penetrate everywhere (Bockmuehl 1977:21). I can add that the mission or mandate of the Church is to actively participate in the completion of this process. If we go further, we will find statements in the Bible, constantly presenting the universality of God's reign and the fact that it is in the process of fulfillment (Bockmuehl 1977:21). From this same perspective of the universality of God's reign, it is worth mentioning that it affects even the divine Persons as we have seen with the notion of *missio Dei*. With Oborji, it can be argued that the fact that the mission is based on the doctrine of the Trinity, it expresses the unique reign of God. Therefore, this reign becomes that of Christ because the reign of God and the reign of Christ are one and the same (Oborji 2006:140-141).

On the theme of "The Reign of God," Taber asks as a research question the following: "How can we find the global and cosmic message presented to us by the Bible? How can a theological and missiological balance be achieved? (Taber 1984:7). His hypothesis is that the Kingdom of God appears to him to be central and more global to satisfy us in these questions. To conclude this section, it is worth noting that the notion of the kingdom of God was not a central concern for Wright. Glasser, who preceded Wright, gives a more appropriate place to the concept of God's reign in broadly addressing the subject that highlights a certain continuity between the two Testaments. According to Glasser, the prophets announced the establishment of this Kingdom and Jesus is the one who inaugurated this Kingdom. Glasser's approach considers the promise and fulfillment of God's kingdom from the perspective of the Old Testament. That might be one of the reasons why the concept was not central to Wright's approach. It has been made clear that one of Wright's concerns is, to defend the position of the Old Testament in theological reflections. However, in reading Glasser, it is quite clear that a hermeneutic reading of the Kingdom of God is also possible. This, therefore, calls to question Wright's approach, whether intentional or not. For me, the notion of the Kingdom of God would be a more important hermeneutic key to reading the Bible.

### **5.2.3 Contribution of David Bosch and Timothy Tennent on *missio Dei***

This paragraph demonstrates how Bosch and Tennent helped fill the void left by Wright. Their differing views from that of Wright are our priority. It shows how

they contributed to the development of the concept of *missio Dei*, in addition to what Wright was able to do.

#### **5.2.3.1 David Bosch's Contribution**

In assessing Wright's approach in light of Bosch's it useful to point out at first glance that Wright is an Old Testament scholar and an Evangelical who defends the missional foundation of the Bible and focus on the centripetal impulse of the mission (Wright 2012:13-14). On the other hand, David Bosch is a New Testament scholar and an ecumenical who still defends the biblical foundation of the mission, but more broadly going beyond isolated texts (Bosch 1995:15). Wright's approach is evaluated in the light of Bosch's approach primarily in four areas, some of which have already been developed above. The starting point is the relationship between the Christian mission and the *missio Dei*; second, the involvement of the Old Testament in the Christian mission; then, the reign of God and the hermeneutic key, and finally, his contribution to missiological hermeneutics.

First, unlike Wright, whose goal is to demonstrate that the mission belongs to God and is the thread of the biblical narrative, Bosch tries to stimulate the Church to become more involved in God's mission. For him, "the Christian faith is intrinsically missionary" (Bosch 1995:20). All mission theology was to help the Church to fulfil its role as a participant in the *Missio Dei*. Bosch has done better than Wright to bring out this aspect of God's people's participation in His mission. Wright's approach informs us, through his Old

Testament exegesis, that the mission belongs to God in which the Church participates. But it should be noted that very few elements excite to the Christian mission. In my opinion, it can also demotivate a local church ill-informed of the mission dimension of the Church. Bosch's whole approach, as his book, *The Dynamics of Christian Mission* points out, attempts to justify the biblical basis of the Christian mission. In this regard, he states that "Christianity is missionary by nature, otherwise it betrays its raison d'être" (Bosch 1995:20). To this end, the *missio Dei* is considered to be a climaxing account in the Old Testament intended to fuel the missionary action of the Church or it becomes an abstract story. For Bosch, the *missio Dei* is currently involved in the Church's commitment. He argues that "in our time, God's view of the world is manifested in large part in the Church's missionary commitment" vis-à-vis all the evils that plague society (Bosch 1995:22). The Mission of the Church is, therefore, not to turn a blind eye to these realities. Its responsibility is to be actively involved.

Second, Bosch finds a significant discontinuity between the two Testaments and speaks of a change of model (Bosch 1995:27), which Wright did not do (Wiher 2014:13). It is true that Bosch pays little attention to the Old Testament in mission. Nevertheless, he recognizes that the Old Testament is crucial to understanding the notion of mission in the New Testament, although the traditional definition of mission excludes the Old Testament. The centripetal and centrifugal dimensions of the mission are the two concepts that divide Bosch and Wright under the gaze of the Old Testament. For Bosch, Israel was not tasked to go among the nations. God alone was a missionary in the Old

Testament. For those whom we call proselytists were drawn to the faith of Israel by God himself (Bosch 1995:29-31). I do not necessarily agree with Bosch that Israel had not received a missionary mandate. The researcher's position is that Abraham was sent, and that Israel was born on the basis of him being sent. The great moments that marked the biblical history of the mission are constructed on the term "sending" or the verb "to send." The mission of Abraham, Israel, Jesus, the Spirit and the Church was marked by the order to "go." If Abraham had not obeyed the command to "go," the nations would not have been blessed in him. God is sovereign. He can bless nations in a different way.

However, choosing this path requires that the Church take this into account. God did not ask Abraham to leave his country simply because the people were sinners. Genesis 12 does not allow us to believe that Abraham had a particular good ethic like Noah in his day. Nor was God unable to bless him among his people. We believe that the act of sending was significant to God in this mission as well as in that of the Church at present. Third, Bosch distinguishes himself from Wright by the notion of the reign of God. Bosch begins by emphasizing the absence of the phrase "reign of God" (*malkuth Yahweh*) in the Old Testament (Bosch 1995:46). He later argues that "the reign of God (*basileia tou theou*) is unquestionably the central notion of all the ministry of Jesus" (Bosch 1995:47).

Not only does Bosch value God's reign in the New Testament, but we also believe that his approach implies that it may be another missional hermeneutic key, although he does not explicitly affirm it. He defines the reign of



God as a reality that goes beyond the socio-economic and political development of humanity (Bosch 1995:23). Bosch thinks like Donald Senior and Carroll Stuhlmueller and advocates the reign of God as "the starting point and context of mission" (Bosch 1995:47). Moreover, the contemporary Christian mission only makes sense in this reality of God's reign (Bosch 1995:48). Moreover, Bosch finds that the reign of God was Jesus' priority in his teaching throughout his earthly ministry instead of making the Torah his doctrinal basis (Bosch 1995:52). Indeed, Bosch defends the centrifugal momentum as if the centripetal momentum was not part of the mission.

Fourth, it could be said that Wright complements Bosch regarding the field of hermeneutics. Bosch precedes Wright and approaches hermeneutics by denouncing the weaknesses of the historical-critical method. He first believes that the method has created a certain distance between the Bible and the Church. He stresses that "if we want the missionary enterprise to be authentic and our reflection on mission to be relevant, more attention will have to be paid to this branch of missiology [the biblical foundations of mission]" (Bosch 1992:175).

Bosch thinks that the important work done in this method could be considered, but the transition from a sociological analysis to a "critical hermeneutics" approach would be ideal for mission theology (Bosch 1995:36). Second, although Bosch notices few missional elements in the Old Testament, nevertheless, his hermeneutics precede Wright's concerning a comprehensive reading of the Scriptures for mission. Then, Bosch finds that the historical-critical

method still creates a distance between the context of biblical texts and the context of the contemporary reader. He states in this regard that: "For the historical-critical study, one can understand what the mission meant to Paul, to Mark, to John, but it does not automatically deliver to us that we must think of the mission in our concrete situation" (Bosch 1995:36).

Finally, Bosch proposes, for this purpose, the formulation of a critical hermeneutics. For him, the goal of "critical hermeneutics" is to look from the inside, with self-definition as a key concept, in contrast to social analyses that focus on the outside (Bosch 1995:36).

For *missio Dei*, Bosch was unable to use the debates of the past as witnessed with Wright. Bosch was concerned about the history of the Christian mission rather than the debates around the *missio Dei* concept. Indeed, this notion simply served as the basis for building the foundations of the Christian mission. Instead, Bosch developed ecclesiological hermeneutics of the mission. His remarkable contribution lies in his theology of the reign of God, which calls into question the hermeneutic key proposed by Wright.

#### **5.2.3.2 Contribution of Timothy Tennent**

Tennent's approach allows to assess Wright's approach primarily on the Trinitarian theology of the mission he developed. Tennent chose to use the Latin term "*missio Dei*" to highlight the relationship between this notion of *missio Dei* and the Trinity (Tennent 2010:53-101). The Trinitarian theology of mission necessarily implies the place of the term "sending" and the role of the Holy Spirit

in the *missio Dei*. These two aspects were not a major concern for Wright. Tennent believes that "biblical missiology must be firmly built on the foundation of Trinitarian theology" (Tennent 2010:59).

In his book, *Invitation to World Mission: A Trinitarian Missiology for the Twenty-first Century*, he strongly defends the Trinitarian foundation of the mission. Inspired by Georg Vicedom, Lesslie Newbigin, Kwamé Bediako, Alan Roxburgh and Ajith Fernando, Tennent develops, throughout his book, *missio Dei* as the involvement of God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit in the mission. For him, God the Father is the source, the initiator, the sender and the purpose of the *missio Dei*; God the Son embodies the *missio Dei* and God the Holy Spirit assures the presence of the *missio Dei* in the world (Tennent, 2010:75-457).

Tennent was more specific than Wright on the distinction of the term "mission." He pointed out in his approach that "mission" refers to the mission of the Triune God and "missions" refers to all Christian missions, as their participation in the mission of the Triune God (Tennent 2010:59). Tennent does not refer to the debates of the past, but his approach sums up the contribution of debates for the construction of a biblical theology of mission. In the same vein, Wiher believes that "in reflecting on the roles of the divine Persons, Tennent goes further than the Reformers who insisted on the non-division of ad extra divine works " (Wiher 2014:14).

Tennent agrees with Lesslie Newbigin that "the mission of the Church must and can only be understood in terms of the Trinitarian model" (Newbigin

1989:118. In Tennent, 2010: 66). The key passage of Newbigin is in John 20:21-22 "...As the Father has sent me, I am sending you. [...] he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit." According to Newbigin, Tennent asserts that "this passage demonstrates the continuity between the Mission of the Father and the Mission of Jesus and the mission of the Holy Spirit in the life and witness of the Church" (Tennent 2010:67). The Trinity is the starting point for the Church to understand the true meaning of the missions and how it is attached to the *missio Dei*, and how the supreme authority of the mission of God's people rests on that of the Triune God (Tennent 2010:67).

Bediako's Approach was no less important to Tennent. In this approach, the story of *missio Dei* is simultaneously at three different levels. The divine initiative is attributed to the work of God the Father; the history of the transmission of the Gospel through the testimony of the Church finds its source in God the Son and indigenous assimilation demonstrates the central role of the Holy Spirit in the *missio Dei* (Tennent 2010:70-73). After the first part that introduces Tennent's thesis, the last three parts were devoted to demonstrating how the *missio Dei* is articulated between divine Persons, Tennent's contribution is considered to reveal two weaknesses in Wright: the notion of "sending" and the mission of the Holy Spirit, inseparable for the demonstration of the notion of *missio Dei* as the Trinitarian foundation of the mission.

### **5.3 Practical approach to understanding Wright on the notion of *missio Dei***

In this second part, a theoretical and practical approach to a clearer reading of Wright on the notion of *missio Dei* is proposed. By reading Wright's "The Mission of God", or by browsing his works that directly or indirectly address the question of mission, we find that Wright invites us to a global consideration of the Bible for mission. To do so, Wright finds that we cannot understand the *missio Dei* without the use of a good missional reading of the Bible. Therefore, missional hermeneutics has been one of his priorities to show that the whole Bible fosters us on the *missio Dei*. Therefore, to fully understand Wright, it is relevant to re-establish him in the current debates around the search for missiological hermeneutics.

### **5.3.1. Debates for the search for missional hermeneutics**

These debates are addressed, first on the definitional problem of missional hermeneutics. Indeed, theologians who have reflected on hermeneutics have found themselves confronted with a difficulty of definition related mainly to the expressions "missiological hermeneutics," "missionary hermeneutics" and "missional hermeneutics." The focus of the problem was to determine which of these expressions would be better suited to give a balanced and contemporary definition. Charles Van Engen is a pioneer in this field of research and opts for the term "missiological hermeneutics". For him, missiological hermeneutics "allows the Bible itself to question, reform and transform missiological assumptions, that is, the hermeneutics that the Church uses to address the Scriptures, so that the Scriptures themselves can make a portrait of God's mission" (Van Engen, 2012: 15. In Wall, 2015: 7). He puts the Bible back at the center of missiological hermeneutics. This helps to determine the "missiological assumptions" of the reader. For Vanhoozer the existence or non-existence of assumptions is not a concern, because everyone reads the Bible with

assumptions. What is important is to promote assumptions that correspond to the nature of biblical texts (Wall 2015:6-8). According to Richard Bauckham, the term "missionary hermeneutics" would be ideal. He defines missionary hermeneutics as follows:

It is a way of reading the Bible of which mission is the hermeneutic key, just as, for example, liberation is the hermeneutic key to reading the Bible for liberation theology. Such missionary hermeneutics would not simply be the study of the theme of mission in biblical texts, but rather a way of reading the entirety of the scriptures with the mission for central interest and purpose. Of course, such missionary hermeneutics can and should be only one way among others to read Scripture since the mission itself is not the sole subject of the entire Bible. Nevertheless, missionary hermeneutics would be a way of reading Scripture to understand what the Church's mission in the world is, as Scripture describes it, and thus to inspire and inform the missionary praxis of the Church (Bauckham, 1999:1; In Wall, 2015:6).

George Hunsberger chose the term "missional hermeneutic" and presented several relevant approaches to this debate. The first is to consider that the biblical texts are intended to provide the people of God with training for a dynamic mission. Second, the reader of the biblical texts is placed at the center of the hermeneutic process. Third, the gospel and culture are essential elements of missional hermeneutics. The fourth approach Hunsberger mentions is that of Wright (Hunsberger 2011:310-318). It is in this context of debate and attempted definitions that we can read Wright about his approach to a missional reading of the scriptures. His definition of missiological hermeneutics was given in chapter two of this work. Indeed, he considers *missio Dei* to be "the guiding thread of the biblical narrative." Hunsberger developed this typology of four approaches because none of these approaches alone is sufficient to provide robust hermeneutics to help God's people recover the missionary message of biblical texts (Hunsberger 2011:310). However, in order to find good missionary

practice, one must take into account these various proposals that have been made to assist the Church in its participation in the *missio Dei*.

### **5.3.2 Some avenues of research for missional hermeneutics**

We can look again at the typology of George Hunsberger, which brings together four authors. First, there is James Brownson who focused his reflection on how the rereading of the biblical text could help the Church to solve the problems that exist between the gospel message and the realities of contemporary society (Hunsberger 2011:316-317). Michael Barram's position, on the other hand, is aimed at the importance of the reader in the interpretation of the texts. For him, the social realities surrounding the reader should direct his approach towards practical missiological conclusions. His approach echoes what Tim Carriker calls "in front of the text." Darrell Guder, for his part, believes that a missional reading of biblical texts should play a role of trainer that will equip the Christian community for a dynamic and effective mission (Hunsberger 2011:313-314). Hunsberger incorporates in this typology, Wright's approach which will be discussed separately at the end of this point.

In addition to these four thinkers mentioned by Hunsberger, we have other interesting approaches. First Schnabel (Schnabel 2004. In Wall, 2015: 16) who intervenes and poses two problems. First, he believes that the Gospels "are not "missionary treaties" in the sense that they seek to convince non-believers of the Good News of Jesus Christ" (Schnabel 2004:1493; In Wall, 2015: 16). Second, he calls into question the presence of missionary activity in the Old

Testament in the same way as the New Testament. Secondly, we have Tim Carriker (Carriker 2010) who suggests that missiological hermeneutics is guided by three crucial approaches. For him, missional hermeneutics require the reader to first take care of the "world behind the text", that is, to deal with the context of the authors (Carriker 2010: 31-38; In Wall, 2015: 16). He then considered the "world of text," a step that involves focusing on the content of the text under study. The last consideration is the "world before the text" that targets the reader and his universe (Wall 2015:16). Third, we have Shawn Redford who develops "spiritual hermeneutics" whose process "is to update and contextualize biblical texts with the help of the Holy Spirit as part of the mission" (Carriker 2010:31-38; In Wall, 2015: 17). Fourthly, we have Peter Penner (Penner 2012), who, in turn, encourages dialogue between missiological and biblical studies because, according to him, the missionary contexts of biblical texts seem crucial in the interpretation of such texts (Penner 2012; In Wall, 2015: 16). It is in these various attempts to develop missiological hermeneutics that we can better understand Wright. He does not necessarily object to the above authors. He completes them with his special features accentuated on the Old Testament.

### **5.3.3 Wright's contribution to missiological hermeneutics**

It is up to scholars to say that Wright's notion of *missio Dei* is more precisely understood in this context of the debates and research of missional hermeneutics. Wright's approach in this regard is mainly developed in Chapter 4. According to Wright, it is not necessary to exert much effort to discover the



missiological dimension of the Scriptures. He finds that the Bible is nothing but the very fruit of God's mission. In other words, he sees the Bible as a narrative document that traces the history of God's mission and that of his people, which He at the same time decided to be involved in it. What he proposes as missional hermeneutics requires that the biblical texts be read from this perspective. In addition, it should be noted that his hermeneutics require that all scriptures be considered. Therefore, he denounces any missional hermeneutics that does not take into consideration the Old Testament and strongly defends that this account of *missio Dei* begins first in the Old Testament before continuing in the New Testament and in the Church. For Wright, the Bible tells us the history of *missio Dei*.

#### **5.4 Missional implications of the concept of *missio Dei* in Burkina Faso**

Wright's approach to the concept of *missio Dei* allows evangelical Christians and missiologists, in the context of Burkina Faso, to understand the Christian mission, and how to rethink a biblical theology of the mission that will equip the Church of Burkina Faso, to properly assume its place and responsibility in this *missio Dei*.

##### **5.4.1 Fighting the ecclesiocentrism of *missio Dei***

The Church is one and so is the mission. However, the degradation of the spirit of unity within the universal Church also affects its participation in the *missio Dei*. Bosch thinks that the Church is missionary by nature and at the same time

is one. Furthermore, the dynamic relationship between mission and unity in the Church makes them so inseparable that acceptance or rejection concerns both (Bosch 1992:67).

Indeed, denominations are in God's will, but are currently victims of the anthropocentrism of mission at the ecclesial level. The researcher concurs with Bosch that "in its oldest manifestations, denominationalism has led to purposeless and fruitless rivalries that have led churches to close in on themselves" (Bosch 1992:68). I observe these denominational rivalries in what the disciples of Jesus did according to Luke 9. 49-50: "John spoke and said, Master, we saw someone casting demons in your name, and we told him not to do it again, because he is not one of us "Don't stop him," Jesus replied, "... ». He who is not with us, we tend to want to reject him even if he has received an authentic vocation for the mission. The institutionalization of the Church, in some measures, can be an obstacle to mission (Kalembe 2012). This idea can be supported with the assertion of Richard Niebuhr who thinks that the denomination is "a curious institution [...] which can be described as a kind of religious order with a whole missionary vocation busy with defending its positions and which is no longer conscious of being the universal invisible Church" (Niebuhr 1959:177).

One that it may happen that a theological institution or a local denomination or church stops funding theological studies, simply because the individuals invested in, go to work, after their training, in other Christian organizations than the original organization. It is a personal point of view

proposed in order to show in which practical case the *missio Dei* can be practiced nowadays from an ecclesiocentric perspective than a theocentric one in the Church. The term "it may happen that" is used so as not to say that there are already cases since there is no evidence as yet. Severe measures can be taken to avoid possible defections considered by ecclesiastical leaders as a loss to them. This is a purely ecclesiocentric attitude of the mission contrary to an understanding of the mission in the context of the *missio Dei*. Theocentrism is what *missio Dei* pushes for, but also the unity of the Church for mission. Willem Saayman believes that "in the years to come, we must aim for a serious articulation of reflection on the unity of the Church with that of mission" (Saayman 1984:127). I believe that we are already in those predicted years. The ecclesiocentrism of mission is one of the major challenges that researchers face in the mission today.

#### **5.4.2 Current risks of the fragmentation of Christian missions**

The evangelical theology of mission is at risk of being confined to a limited geographical framework if Christians on each continent are content with an internal mission. If the *missio Dei* is, in addition to the sending of divine processes, the sending of the Church and individuals by the divine Persons, if it includes going to make disciples of all nations (Mt 28:19) and witnessing to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8), a mission strategy that would limit the boundaries of the mission would be more a handicap than an asset. One suspects that the mission can no longer be universal or theocentric as demanded by the *missio Dei*. The Church cannot function without vision or method to achieve her goals.

Nevertheless, it is possible with an ear that listens to the voice of the Holy Spirit who sends people where he wants, when he wants, as he wants and as per God's specific purpose (Acts 13:2).

The notion of *missio Dei*, as described by Wright, can help the evangelical movement formulate an evangelical theology of mission that corrects its way of participating in God's mission. All participate in the *missio Dei*. Wright introduces us to the importance of *missio Dei* and says it can change our mission paradigm. He encourages the Church to consider God's purposes first rather than human approaches. Then he suggests thinking of the mission as determined and accomplished by God rather than an action undertaken by the Church. Finally, he encourages Christians to understand the mission through theocentric glasses rather than through anthropocentric or ecclesiocentric glasses (Wright 2012:60).

Samuel Escobar proposes humility and submission to God, for "Christian mission is first and foremost God's mission" (Escobar 2005:101). He points out that the Christian mission will be unsuccessful "if the human side of the missionary enterprise takes over and decides how it is conducted" (Escobar 2005:101). It is time to commit to change. Tennent admits that he suffers from the fact that evangelicals ardently proclaim missions as coming from the very heart of God and his initiative, while timidly remaining clinged to their own missional initiatives and strategies (Tennent 2010:59). Trust that the mission belongs to God and that He is more committed to it than we are, can help us to

depend more on His Spirit in our participation in the *missio Dei*, for the sole glory of God.

In the context of the *missio Dei*, evangelical theology needs to broaden its scope of mission. To this end, Kalemba (2008:4), in the context of evangelical theology in Africa, stresses that "the mission of African theology [...] is to revitalize the Christian mission, stimulate the African spiritual rebirth and defend the poor and oppressed, because God is always on their side." I think that evangelical missiologists can develop an understanding of the notion of *missio Dei* and adapt it to the cultural realities of all peoples. However, this will not be possible without the commitment of these missiologists on the debates around the notion of *missio Dei*. To this end, it is believed that Wright's approach can help the Christian Church in Burkina Faso to direct its hermeneutic reflections towards the mission of remaining solely on the hermeneutics of independence and the quest for social well-being.

#### **5.4.3 Risk of discrimination in the Christian mission**

Presently, the risk of fragmentation of the mission in the Christian church in Burkina Faso is addressed. Discrimination related to the difference in age, gender and social rank of the individuals in the body of Christ in the country is my target. In the church in Burkina Faso, as elsewhere in the world, we have in the assemblies, very old people, adults, men and women, young people and children, rich and poor, indigenous and foreign, etc. When a section is knowingly

or unconsciously left on the margins of God's mission, the revision of that church's commitment becomes necessary.

According to Wright, God's mission is integral (Wright, 2012: 351), which assumes that the whole Bible is to be considered. According to Jesus' statements in Matthew 28: 19 "... make all nations disciples... The proclamation of the gospel is aimed at "all nations." This expression excludes any discrimination of the recipient, because the nation also is composed of very old people, adults, men and women, young people and children, rich and poor, indigenous and foreign, etc. If the proclamation of the Gospel makes no distinction between people on the side of the beneficiaries, it must also not distinguish from those who must proclaim it.

In the second chapter, it was observed that most of the denominations that are statutory members of the FEME involve less children, youth and women in churches in the integral process of God's mission (Yanogo n.d:84-112). Similarly, in the centrifugal impulse, they go less towards the children. In pastoral care, children are sometimes in certain denominations classified in the various. Some denominations do not have a ministry for children and young people (Yanogo n.d:160-165). Yet children and young people were at the very heart of Jesus' mission. Children and young people are no less aware of the value of God's mission. Christianity is not a religion of the elderly and adults. On the contrary, it is a religion founded by a group of young people whose mastermind, Jesus himself, was 30 years old.

A mission that is integral, is involved in the fight of injustice in all its forms. It is involved in the establishment of justice at all levels. The geographical space is considered in its entirety, human beings are considered in their entirety regardless of age, gender, social rank, race, origin, etc. The Christian church in Burkina Faso can review its commitment to God's mission and correct the inadequacies associated with discrimination in all its forms.

### **5.5 Partial Conclusion**

In this chapter, the verb "to send" was the foundation of my argumentation. At the end of this chapter, it is noted that it is difficult, if not impossible, to speak of divine possessions in Christianity without the term "sending" or the verb "to send." The mission in the Trinity is characterized by sending. The *missio Dei* is the mission that belongs to the Triune God. This implies that there is no Trinity without the presence of the Holy Spirit. The recognition of the Work of the Spirit in the Mission is convincing that the *missio Dei* is based on the Trinity. Thus, Trinity is not synonymous with polytheism. The divine Persons are one and indivisible in their action and their unity is eternal. This character of unity and uniqueness of the divine Persons is a crucial concept for the Christian mission at present. Wright was not able to help us understand the *missio Dei* from this perspective.

In addition, the current research has led to the discovery that the theological world can go beyond the hermeneutic key proposed by Wright. The reign of God takes over the mission because God undertook the mission for his

reign over all humanity and all his creature. Whether present or future, material or immaterial, the evidence is that the reign of God is the ultimate goal and starting point of *missio Dei*, as well as the meaning of the Church and its mission. In this inadequacy of Wright, Bosch contributed massively in the questioning of his hermeneutic key while supporting positions in favor of the reign of God. Tennent's approach helped to assess Wright's need for the use of the Latin term "*missio Dei*" if our mission theology is to have a Trinitarian basis.

So, to understand Wright, it is not a question of limiting ourselves to the concept *missio Dei* and the debates around that term. The debates about the research of missional hermeneutics that the *missio Dei* concept spawned is one of our keys to understanding Wright in his approach. It is in this that the importance of his approach to the notion of *missio Dei* for Christian missions in all cultural strata is understood. It stimulates the commitment of theologians to hermeneutics reflections and corrects certain errors in missionary practice. Most of all, those that promote the ecclesiocentrism of mission in the Churches and Christian institutions.



## CHAPTER 6: GENERAL CONCLUSION

### 6.1 Introduction

This chapter is linked with the statement of the research problem, objectives, research questions, methodology, etc. in connection with the five previous chapters. However, the research analysis demonstrates that the notion of *missio Dei* has been an important concept in mission theology. This led to seeking knowledge of the relevance of the concept in the fulfillment of the Christian mission. Wright's approach was the first choice as the nucleus for the present study. In previous chapters, emphasis was on the history of the concept, and Wright's conceptualization of and its missiological implications for evangelicals in Burkina Faso.

As already observed, the concept of *missio Dei* was not the main concern of the Church from its origins until the Middle Ages. Nevertheless, the theological reflections favored the emergence of the concept in the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its intensification at the dawn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. The concept is essential at present in the missiological reflection because mission can only be understood by it. The concept also remains important, although Wright does not think so. For the word "mission" used in these two languages is derived from the Latin term "*missio*." We can affirm that it is the whole of the theocentric rather than the ecclesiocentric process of mission that is, the Trinitarian nature of God, the participation of God's people in the divine mission that defines what the notion of *missio Dei* is in theology today. *Missio Dei* is, therefore, more than just a sending, although the term "sending" holds the central place in its understanding. Currently, the

understanding of the mission depends largely on this notion and enjoys a broad consensus in the various Christian movements.

Wright's conception of the *missio Dei* is to be understood. His approach sees the *missio Dei* as God's initiative for the redemption of all that belongs to him. This approach is opposed to any trend that divides the mission. Rather, it strongly promotes unity in the mission. The *missio Dei* becomes the nucleus and everything is organized around it. The whole Church is invited to take part in the sole mission. Also, the purpose of this mission is to restore not only human beings, but also the whole universe and everything in it. So, there is only one mission, initiated by God and which remains his property, but with one purpose for the benefit of many. Wright thinks that in the scriptures, everything is *missio Dei*. Thus, his solemn recommendation in this discovery is to encourage Christians to read the scriptures with missional glasses. One of Wright's strengths is his approach to missional hermeneutics and his theology on the missional basis of the Scriptures. This strength is to the benefit of the Christian mission of evangelicals in order to revitalize its participation in the *missio Dei*.

However, in reading Wright's *the Mission of God*, the reader needs to pay attention to the elements that are missing in this book and the proposed approach. It therefore would be necessary to fill this void by referring to other authors for a broader understanding of the concept. Indeed, Wright could not, in his missional hermeneutics, demonstrate the relationship between the notion of *missio Dei* and the Trinity. However, understanding *missio Dei* as the Trinitarian foundation of the mission allows the Church, especially the evangelical movement in Burkina Faso, to build on a solid foundation in order

to reinvigorate its missionary strategies. Also, in reading the Scriptures from a missionary perspective, it is important to be aware of the discontinuity that exists between the two Testaments in this regard. In addition, Wright presented the goals of the mission without mentioning the goal of establishing God's reign over all His creation. Reading the Bible, we can notice that everything is missional, Christological but also eschatological regarding the kingdom of God. God wants us to participate in his mission. However, the culmination is to establish His reign in people's hearts and prepare His final settlement on all things throughout the universe.

In general, three main elements allow detecting the relevance of the concept of *missio Dei* in fulfilling the Christian mission as evangelicals. First, research has allowed discovering that *missio Dei* involves the mission of the divine Persons. This discovery helps to realize that *missio Dei* has a Trinitarian foundation and that the mission belongs to God and not to the Church. In other words, it can be argued that there is not a mission that belongs to Christians in a given part of the world. The latter and all Christians of the world form the Universal or Catholic Church of God, and each one, can actively participate in the *missio Dei*. By understanding the *missio Dei* from this perspective, an entire dependence will be developed on the Triune God, the initiator of the mission, the God who sends us and walks with us at the same time. Thus, the obstacles of mission in the French-speaking world can be broken down and rise to the challenge for the actual manifestation of God's reign in the hearts of Men.

Secondly, understanding the concept of *missio Dei* can help the Evangelical Church to first develop an attitude of unity between the different

peoples and cultures that make it up, and then, to collaborate and maintain a dynamic partnership between the Church and Western missions and other parts of the majority world. For all these parties participate in the *missio Dei* for the sole and ultimate purpose which is to prepare the definitive establishment of God's reign over the nations and on all His creation. Participating in the same mission and moving towards the same goal makes the unity of the world's Christians for mission necessary. Indeed, the very characteristic of the *missio Dei* is the unity of the divine Persons and this is important for the Christian mission as Jesus affirms in his priestly prayer in John 17:21-23: "that all of them may be one. [...] May they also be in us so that the world may believe that you have sent me [...] that they may be one as we are one, [...]. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

Finally, this understanding can help the Church to further engage in theological reflections in order to develop a biblical theology of mission that will allow the Evangelical Church to emerge from its anthropocentrism or ecclesiocentrism with regard to mission in all these forms, doctrinal or ecclesial. It is not possible to exactly pinpoint what causes the loss of interest in the concept of *missio Dei* in the theology advocated by Wright. Does Wright avoid the term because of his much-disputed past? It would be hard to say. However, it is believed that the low commitment of the evangelicals of the French-speaking world, and in particular in Africa, may be linked to the fact that theologians and Christians in this part of the world are not sufficiently informed about the issues of the Christian mission in Africa and the world. Wright observed that evangelical Christians still ignore the

fundamental themes currently being debated in missiology. He points out that even the intra-evangelical discussions expressed in the documents of the Lausanne movement are still unknown within the evangelical movement. That is why Wright limited the scope of his reflection to debates in the evangelical movement with a view to informing as many people as possible. These are the objectives that we are also pursuing in this work.

In the end, Wright's analysis corrects two main errors, which have been identified, in the Christian mission in Africa. First, it breaks the divisions of the classical conception of mission that founded the Christian mission on isolated texts. Instead of looking for passages in the Bible to support the biblical foundation of mission, Wright's theory makes the task easier. He invites us to consider all scriptures as missional. Second, this approach decentralizes the mission. Indeed, the mission is not reserved for any region, people or race in the world. It is not intended to increase the number of temples for a denomination or the number of faithful in a parish. The mission is to God and wherever we serve, we participate in the *missio Dei* and not in a purely ecclesiastical mission. Moreover, this decentralization of the mission does not exclude cultural realities. On the contrary, we need, in the light of God's mission model, to develop a contextual theology, specific to each people in all the countries of the world, which will make our participation in the *missio Dei* dynamic and effective.

## **6.2 Missiological implication of the concept in the context of Burkina Faso**

The approach of the present study to show how understanding the concept of *missio Dei* can help the Evangelical Church in Burkina Faso in its commitment to Christian mission. This chapter emphasises the thought of Christophe Wright who considers the *missio Dei* as an Integral Mission. *Missio Dei* involves the whole Bible. It does not exclude anything in the geographical space and must not exclude the beneficiaries or the actors of the *missio Dei*. Nor should it minimize one aspect of the two mandates that make up the *missio Dei*: the cultural or creational mandate and the missionary mandate. In the context of Burkina Faso, focus is on the participation of the actors in the *missio Dei*. The mission is not reserved only for a few privileged figures or having a central or full-time ministry at the expense of the rest of the church members distinguished by the appellation “laic”. The active involvement of people who are generally marginalized in society is defended. These are the widows, the orphans, the poor, the strangers, the youth and the child. So, it is a fight against social discrimination in the *missio Dei*.

Secondly, Discussion also includes the economic and political discrimination that the cultural mandate endures in the Christian church in Burkina Faso. The Lord has not only called us to win souls. The satisfaction of people's earthly needs also rests with us and makes the *missio Dei* truly an integral mission.

## **6.2.1 Combating social discrimination**

### **6.2.1.1 Involve widows, orphans, poor people, and strangers in *missio Dei***

In this section, focus shifts to the marginalized areas in the mission. The interview between African Pastor David Zac Niringiye and Andy Crouch gives birth to an article entitled "Knowing Life on the Margins". In the interview, David mentions the incredible talent that can be found in marginalized areas. It is an illusion to think that one holds a preferred position to succeed in participating in the *missio Dei*. It is not only those at the center who have the right and opportunity to participate in God's mission. Those on the margins have amazing potential to succeed in an incredible way in God's mission. That is why God, in his mission strategy, planned in such a way that everyone can participate. The story of Jesus and Nathaniel is a relevant illustration for this purpose. The Apostle John writes this: "Can something good come from Nazareth?" (John 1:46). Nathanael is surprised that the Messiah came from there. From this perspective, David sees that North Americans do not think that anything good can come from Africa. To this end, for the major decisions of the global mission, the church in North America once underestimated African participation. Nazareth is a city in Galilee. Bethlehem, a city of Judah (Mt 2:6).

Both cities were on the margins (Luke 2:4) i.e., less considered as important in the region at that time (Gray, 2016: 37). Rashid (2007), telling the story of Jesus describes his birthplace as a "small country, Palestine, small town, Nazareth, little girl, Mary, little child, Jesus." All his expressions marginalize the birthplace of Jesus, yet it is there that the one who will

change the course of the history of mankind will come out. This shows that those at the center are not necessarily the ones who will shape the future. Today, what awaits us is on the margins in the mission and that the future of Christianity is in Asia, Africa and Latin America. In Acts, the push of the intercultural mission began in Antioch (Syria, a pagan city) and not in Jerusalem (Gray, 2016: 37). By lay people, not by the Apostles.

American churches are involved in the mission abroad, but there is this great challenge of going to the margins. As long as you are not ready to go to the sidelines, you are not good for the mission. We can overcome the idea of being at the center if we read the scriptures differently. That is, to make a missional reading of scripture as proposed by Wright (2012: 43). Jesus' brothers, sisters and companions were not the religious leaders, nor the political and administrative authorities of his time, but the marginalized. At a very difficult time in Israel's history, marginalized people played a crucial role in the deliverance of Israel (2 Kings 7).

The Christian church in Burkina Faso is being challenged. The *missio Dei* implies that every Christian, regardless of age or social class, should not be discriminated against in the mission. Widows, orphans, the poor and foreigners have their place in the *missio Dei*.

#### **6.2.1.2 Involve children in the mission**

Children are less considered in our Christian communities in Burkina Faso. In several local and even national churches, children are usually in miscellaneous. In some churches, they are even forgotten by church leaders. In some places, children are supervised in the local church by untrained



instructors and sometimes by new converts. Many ecclesiastical leaders do not know the telephone number of their instructors or the individuals who take on this responsibility. And yet, "children are the church of today and the leaders of tomorrow" (Compassion International). From the perspective of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Nelson Mandela states that "there is no better image to illustrate the soul of a community than the way it treats its children" (Congo 2012:22). Kofi Annan (Congo 2012:162) argues that "there can be no real human progress without respect for the rights of the child." Children are at the heart of development. This implies that the church cannot claim to implement the *missio Dei* if children are marginalized.

#### **6.2.1.3 Involve the youth in the mission**

Mission is a task that requires Christians to invest in full. This implies that our minds, bodies and souls must all act. Thus, in human society, the young person is the being whose age is not advanced and who is new in all his state. The Bible declares that they are strong (1 John 2:14); the Word of God lives in them (v14); they have defeated the devil. Which is to say that they are overcomers (v14) and visionaries (Acts 2:17).

The hero (God) called young people also out of the world, to take part in the establishment of his kingdom. Unfortunately, the young people answered the call, they became elected deputies, yet their participation in the National Assembly is insufficient. Most of the young people remained mere spectators, passive observers, instead of being active. The fundamental reasons for this passive behavior remain difficult to determine. It is likely that this is related to ignorance on the part of the youth as to their place in the

participation of the church in God's mission. The inactivity of young people can also be the result of poor theology formulated by the elders. One cannot rule out discriminatory and conscious action by some leaders who are victims of bad governance.

It is out of the question to minimize young people in God's mission. The mission will no longer be truly *missio Dei* at a time when youth are not fully involved in the church's participation in God's Mission. Without the full participation of the youth, it is no longer be the church that participates in the mission, but a part of the church. The church is not the adults and the elderly, but all those who confess Christ as their Savior and personal Lord. If the young are truly strong, if the word of God is in them, if they have truly conquered the devil, if they are able to have a vision, then it is difficult to see how they will evade or underestimate themselves in God's mission. Worse still, it is inconceivable to find a well-founded reason for ecclesiastical leaders or the elderly to forget them or sideline them or underestimate them in dynamic and fruitful leadership to the point of slowing down their zeal in participating in God's mission. Qualifications for young people clearly show that they should be on the front line.

A young Christian less committed to God's mission ignores his true identity in Christ. The young person is a member in the *ekklésia* which is the body of Christ where Christ is the head (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13). Being passive in the mission assumes that this young person does not know their place in the body. No young person can serve Christ effectively if he misunderstands his place in Christ as a Young man.

#### **6.2.1.4 Biblical foundation of the place of the youth in God's mission**

The Bible recounts several characters who marked their generation from a young age. Jesus who changed the course of human history "was about thirty years old when he began his ministry" (Luke 3.23). John the Baptist (Birth: 5 BC; Beginning of his ministry: 26 AD (approx. 30); End of his ministry: 28 AD), described as the organizer of the creation of Christianity was about the same age as the founder Jesus Christ (Birth: 25 December 5 BC; Beginning of his ministry: 25 December 26 AD (early 27 AD is more certain); His baptism: beginning in 27 AD).

The collaborators of Jesus, the twelve apostles, could only be young people of his generation. Considering that Simon-Peter (the only one who seemed to be old among the twelve) died around 67, he must have been young when Jesus called him. The same is true of Paul and Andrew, who died at 60. James and John were young because it is mentioned in the biblical texts that they worked with their father. On the subject of James (Alpheus), Mark makes it clear that he is a "minor", that is, young (Mark 15:40). For the rest of the apostles (Philip; Barthelemy; Thomas; Matthew, Thaddeus; Simon the Canaanite; Judas Iscariot), the same argument is given attesting that they were young.

Paul himself was young on the day of his conversion and commitment to missionary work. The date of his death 67 AD attests to this, too. Most of his collaborators seemed to be younger than him. Timothy who ran the church of Ephesus was young (2 Tim 2. 22). Titus and Philemon were probably young too. As such, Christianity is a religion founded by a group of young people.

Although founded by young generation, a traditional model has changed the way youth ministry is given and this has greatly weakened the engagement of youth in the local church. For a long time and all over the world, the church has been a central, strictly sacred ministry, headed by a pastor or priest, with considerable authority, in a privileged and central position. The full-time ministry has received more value in our eyes than the Department of Laity. This is partly the cause of the passivity of young people and the marginalization of children in the church.

The church walked in ignorance for centuries, forgetting the secular ministry. Yet it is a ministry with a strong biblical foundation. Many responded to God's call without ever giving up their secular jobs. In the Old Testament, we can quote Abraham who was a breeder all his life. Joseph and Daniel were missionary officials. Nehemiah was a missionary Governor. Esther, a Queen Missionary. Finally, the Servant of Naaman is considered a missionary and servant. The list goes on. On the New Testament side, it can be noted in the first place that the first to bring the Gospel outside the borders of Jerusalem, according to the order of Acts 1:8, were not the apostles but the laity (Acts 8:4). In the New Testament, women and men can be named, who obeyed the missionary mandate while actively practicing their secular profession. There is Lydia who was a dealer in purple cloth (Acts 16:14); Zenas, a Doctor of the Law (Titus 3:13); Erastus, an administrator of a Roman city (Rom 16:23); Priscilla and Aquila the tentmakers; Luke the Doctor; Paul the Tent Maker; Etc.

A Western model of local church management is nowadays practiced all over local churches around the world. However, this model marginalizes

the role of secular Christians in general, and that of young people (Kalemba 2011). In this model, more value was given to the ministry of religious workers who serve Christ on a "full-time" basis because they received a "special calling," a vocation, and are therefore more important in the kingdom of God than the simple laity. It is said that since the laity did not receive this calling, they serve Christ only on a "part-time" basis and it is hard to imagine how they can bring something important to the life of the community. Lay people are often seen as second-class Christians. They do not have the same standard of spiritual living as pastors or priests. Even more they have less access to the Holy Spirit compared to the Pastor. This misconception is at the root of the lack of youth engagement in local churches and in God's mission in general. And yet the first to the frontline of the holistic development of the church are the young people. They are the operational base from which God's Mission takes place in the world.

## **6.2.2 Combating economic and political discrimination**

### **6.2.2.1 The origin of the separation between faith and wealth**

In the past, Christians seemed to be the poorest in the village. If they were not, however, they were less engaged in socio-economic activities. The rich who joined the church became almost automatically poor. The people of the world had finally identified the church with poverty. Some even rejected the gospel because they wanted to avoid poverty. All because salvation and spiritual life was the best part to keep jealously. Faith and wealth could not coexist. The conquest of faith had therefore dominated that of wealth. Integral or holistic development focuses on a balance between physical and

spiritual prosperity. That is, an equitable growth of the body and soul. Faith concerns the soul and wealth relates to the body.

The origin and evolution of the separation between faith and wealth, the fact that the body and soul did not develop together, or the fact that Christians did not grow in faith and wealth goes back to the genesis of Christendom. In history, the church had separated faith and wealth without knowing it. They studied the Bible to solve only doctrinal issues. A biblical reflection on wealth was almost absent. It is in this sense that others saw salvation more important than social needs. The preaching and teachings were mainly focused on sin and the salvation of the soul than on socio-economic development (Pohor 2016:43-44). Today we talk about the gospel of prosperity (Bourdanné 2011) but in the past it was the gospel of poverty that was on the front page. The social (even the prayer of deliverance) as well as the economic and political side were almost a taboo in Christian assemblies. Some assume that the task of the church is essentially to win souls. Therefore, socio-economic development is the responsibility of the government.

Christianity has failed in its great return to the continent in Africa with regard to the relationship between faith and the wealth of the world. People were content with the minimum subsistence. Several misunderstood passages have been a source of encouragement to separate faith and wealth. Experience in daily life has also encouraged Christians in Burkina Faso to separate faith and wealth. In the history of the church in Burkina Faso, in Christian life, committed Christians have been seen becoming rich, but ending up abandoning the faith, others wane by becoming drunkards or

polygamists. Among these committed Christians, one witnesses others who have cooled down or abandoned the faith altogether after their involvement, either in politics, in the occupation of important positions in public or private administration, or in trade or business. During the 1980s, higher education was discouraged for young people in order to protect their Christian faith. This is at the origin of the separation between faith and earthly riches in the church of Burkina from its origins.

The consequences of this concept are still present. This implies that the solution is not separation, because our strategy has failed. Despite prohibitions and efforts, some make a commitment and sometimes abandon the faith. Therefore, banning is not the answer.

## **6.2.2.2 A biblical solution to the separation between faith and wealth**

### **6.2.2.2.1 *Missio Dei* in the Proverbs**

According to Proverbs 30:7-9, no one is so vulnerable that one cannot truly live as a Christian and be rich enough. The assumption is that between poverty and wealth, no class guarantees a stable faith. These words of Agur reveal that even when one is poor one can deny God despite their growth in faith. Faith alone is not enough to guarantee spiritual stability. At the same time, he reminds us that even one who is too rich can also deny God if Mammon is their guide. The rich and the poor all abandon faith in church assemblies. This is a fact and many Christians in Africa have, at least, one example for each case. If a rich man abandons the faith, people learn it more easily. If a poor person abandons the faith, they are most likely to backslide, but few people notice it, and no one talks about it. It is often the case that

even the Pastor and the elders ignores them because they were counted amongst the scorned. It is therefore risky to say that wealth alone is the potential enemy to faith.

#### **6.2.2.2.2 Qoheleth and *missio Dei***

In Ecclesiastes 2:4-11, Solomon seems to take stock of his life on earth. In it, he presents the great works he has done: He has built houses and made gardens and orchards. He built dams and had plenty of silver and gold. He had in abundance in flocks and herds and he had servants and maids in great numbers. He got everything he wanted and was happy with what his work had given him. But after analysis, he found that all this is "vanity and pursuit of the wind." These words of Solomon in the last verse, can create controversy within the church regarding the attitude of the Christian to wealth. Two trends can arise from this assertion. The proponents of a gospel of poverty and the proponents of a prosperity gospel. The former think that Solomon teaches us to give up material goods while the latter will see that Solomon is pushing us to seek these things. Solomon does not discourage us from doing these things in our lifetime, nor does he dissuade us from rejoicing in the work of our hands. On the contrary, he even encourages us to do all that we can do under the sun during our lifetime (Ecc 9:10) and he also invites us to rejoice in the work of our hands (Ecc 5:17). He encourages us to work, eat, drink, and to take care of our body.

Reading the whole book of Ecclesiastes, one will be tempted to believe that Solomon is discouraging us from seeking wealth. In substance, that is not his intention. His intention is to show us that earthly riches are



temporal, but still necessary for present life. As life is not only limited to this earth, he advises us to seek God on earth as well. In this passage subject to this exegesis, Solomon addresses rather the foolish who runs after wealth and neglects the fear of God, the only eternal value.

#### **6.2.2.2.3 Jesus-Christ teaches on the *missio Dei***

In the New Testament, references that can encourage the Christian to separate faith and wealth are abundant. In Matthew 6:19-21, Jesus addresses those who confide in riches. By wanting to save too much, they no longer practice social works. Jesus does not forbid the possession of material and financial goods. Rather, he is against those who amass too much and place their trust in it. Wealth is not a sin in itself. On the contrary, sin is in its misuse. If Jesus separated faith and wealth he would not speak of heavenly treasures. According to Jesus, the two walks together. For if a person has no wealth, with his faith alone, he cannot make himself treasures in heaven. Moreover, if a person has wealth and does not give alms, he cannot yet make treasures in heaven. If a person is rich but does not have faith, if he does social works, it is useless. He who lacks faith here on earth, and has no wealth, it was better for him not to be born. For Jesus, we must work on integral development while we are on earth.

When someone has faith and does not possess material and financial good, it is certain that he will have salvation, but not treasures. That is why we must no longer separate faith and wealth. Solomon does not forbid us from seeking wealth. He only warns us that it is vanity and pursuit of the wind. Similarly, Jesus also understood that working and having wealth is

good. For Solomon, none of our goods will follow us into the abode of the dead. For Jesus, it is possible to save in the heavenly bank. Solomon advises us to eat and drink because that is our part. Jesus, on the other hand, asks us to save, not in our earthly banks, but in the Heavenly Bank.

In Matthew 6:24, Jesus speaks of an impossibility to serve both at once. If you decide to serve God, you must serve him alone. If you decide to serve Mammon, you have to serve him alone. If you decide to serve God with all your heart, you must renounce Mammon and have nothing to do with him. If Mammon equals money, then the Christian must give up money completely and have nothing to do with money.

In the past and even nowadays, people have believed in this. Some have parted completely with money by saying yes to poverty. They avoided all contact with money and have given themselves entirely in the service of God. Despite this, these people are still attracted to money. They are constantly afraid of lacking the essentials. It is incorrect to think that for Jesus, Mammon means "Money." In Aramaic culture, Mammon is worshipped as a god of finance. Mammon would be a spiritual power that drives human hearts to love money. The spirit of Mammon drives people to give to money a sacred value. Money, in essence, is powerless and has no power. So, we face two forces that can push us in search of money i.e. that of God or of Mammon. If God pushes us in search of money, we will use it well.

However, if Mammon's spirit pushes us, we will act badly. God pushes us to seek money through work, righteousness and integrity. While the spirit of Mammon pushes man to seek money by all fraudulent means and to love

money more than God (Craig 2001: 23-25). Jesus does not tell believers not to seek money. He wants to tell us to be careful of the master who governs us when we seek it.

In Matthew 6:33, Jesus shows that God is not against our physical prosperity. Otherwise, Jesus was not going to say, "all these things will be given to you as well." Jesus further maintains in this passage that his intention is not the separation between faith and wealth. The kingdom and wealth walk together. They are not two enemies but close friends. It is important to point out that Jesus says to seek "first" and not "only" the kingdom. "First" assumes that there is "second." When the first thing is the kingdom, the second will obviously be wealth. Moreover, in the words of Jesus, when one truly seeks the kingdom, wealth naturally ensues. When we separate faith and material good, one supposes that even faith suffers. This law applied in Solomon's life. He had not asked for wealth, but God gave it to him.

In Matthew 19:16-24, Jesus teaches the relationship between wealth and the Kingdom of God. In reading verse 21, one would be tempted to believe that Jesus encourages poverty or the separation between faith and wealth. Jesus' response to the young man does not apply to all those who want to follow Jesus. The young man had come with the intention of setting a trap for Jesus. In the history of the Church, Christians and Pastors have considered that "the path to perfection" is through voluntary poverty. It is illogical to look for something for which you have the obligation to sell if you already have it. Jesus did not encourage poverty, nor the separation between faith and wealth. Jesus saw that the young man's wealth prevented him from

following him. The condition is not a general rule that applies to everyone. Many people have followed Jesus in the history of the church without ever being forced to sell their property. Among many others, Peter (Mark 1:29) and Levi (Mark 2:15).

In this passage, the scandalous element is found in verse 23, Jesus affirms that "it is difficult for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God!" Jesus does not intend to encourage poverty, nor the separation between faith and wealth. It is important for us to pay attention to the words used by Jesus. He says it's "difficult." He does not say it is "impossible." From this pun, we can already understand that there are rich people who will enter the kingdom of God (Kalemba 2012). As a matter of fact, the rich, generally, have more confidence in his wealth than in God. Jesus meant that it is difficult for those who "confide" in the riches to enter the kingdom of God. Jesus is not announcing a general rule because, in the New Testament, we meet rich women who helped Jesus and his disciples (Luke 8:3). Zacchaeus (Luke 19:2), Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-60), Nicodemus (John 3:1), Publius (Acts 28:7) and Lydia (Acts 16:14) were all rich and will be in the kingdom of God. For Jesus never taught them to get rid of it for fear of not entering the kingdom of God. They lived their Christian faith with their financial and material prosperity.

The text of the Gospel according to Luke 6:20 also caused much scandal as to the Christian's relationship with wealth. People had vowed to poverty because of this text. The Belgian king, Leopold II, relied on these passages to plunder the riches of the Congolese underground at the time of colonization with the help of missionaries (Agbede 2016:379). Here, Jesus

does not designate those who are economically poor. The parallel passage in Matthew 5:3 allows us to solve the problem. In this passage, Matthew reports that the Words of Jesus state that they are "the poor in spirit." The same word "poor" in Hebrew referred to both economic and spiritual poverty. It can be translated as humble, unhappy, weak, afflicted, those with crumpled minds, etc. (Stott 1987:27). The same term is used by David in Psalm 40:18 where he calls himself "poor." Certainly, these passages are not material poverty. For David, in all his life, has never been economically poor.

#### **6.2.2.2.4 The Pauline conception of the *missio Dei* concept**

In the epistle of 1Timothy 6:3-20 and specifically in verse 10, Paul declares that "the love of money is the root of all evil." This proposal may raise the intention to separate faith and wealth if, however, people omit the term "love" and consider the rest. Paul wrote to Timothy following false teachings that people gave in the church of Ephesus. The content of their teaching was lies and faith in God as a means of enrichment (v5). The church of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is not spared from this danger. In this century, the Prosperity Gospel is the theme that is on the front page. The proponents of this gospel propose wealth without work. To this they add rites and incantations. We constantly observe the practices of selling oil and water, the introduction of payment of fees for prayer from the anointed man of God whose prayers can bring riches without work. And these fees are graduated according to need. The second possibility is to sow in fertile land. This is none other than the prophet, the apostle, the bishop or the archbishop. They use the Bible to manipulate people to get rich (Kalemba & Banza 2014). In verse 8 Paul advises

contentment to Timothy and not to imitate the false prophets who deceive the people.

In verses 17 to 19, Paul does not discourage seeking money nor does he tell the rich to distribute all their wealth. On the contrary, he encourages them to have wealth, to seek it, but that it should benefit all. He not only encourages them to grow in wealth but also spiritually. Therefore, his writing aims at a balance of man. He hopes that your growth will be a blessing to others who will also grow at all levels. If money is the root of all evils, we should not seek it. Jesus declares that it is when the world has heard the gospel that he will return (Matthew 24:14). If the Church of Christ were to bring all their financial strength together so that the Good News be heard to the whole world, it would take \$2 billion. The Church will not do the mission well if she must entirely give up financial and material wealth.

In these passages we have just browsed, Jesus does not teach that the rich will not enter heaven. He does not teach that only the poor will enter heaven. For when a brief study is conducted of the active or passive people who followed Jesus during his earthly ministry, we discover that many followed Jesus and he never taught them to sell what they had before following him. Many also had faith and wealth but Christ never told them to give up their wealth. If Jesus was adamant about the separation between faith and wealth, he would have taught it to the rich who followed him as well. He said that to one person.

Luke 6 verse 21 is what attests that Jesus is for integral prosperity. Jesus does not say he will become poor. He offers him faith and riches in his kingdom. This shows that the principle does not apply to everyone. It is clear

that this applies only to those who confide in the riches and who choose to serve Mammon. Paul teaches the same integral prosperity to Timothy. According to Paul, we can seek wealth, but in fear of God, in respect of the law, in order to support the mission and help our neighbors. The kingdom of God is as good for the rich as for the poor. The kingdom of God is obtained by faith in Jesus Christ and not by our socio-economic position. If someone thinks that the kingdom of God is achieved through poverty, he loses 50% of God's blessings. As James said, "Show me your faith without the deeds, and I will show you my faith with the deeds" (James 2:18). Thus, it can be concluded by saying, "Show me your faith in poverty and I will show you my faith with wealth."

#### **6.2.2.2.5 John the Evangelist and *missio Dei***

John, in his third epistle, made wonderful wishes to his friend Gaius when he said: "Beloved, I wish that you prosper in all respects and that you will be healthy, as your soul prospers" (3 John 1:2). John's words clearly state that Gaius, spiritually, was prospering. However, John's wish raises doubts about the physical side, although elsewhere it can be found that Gaius was a wealthy Christian. Whether one can find an imbalance in Gaius' life or not, one can nevertheless understand clearly that John's wish for his beloved Gaius was an integral development. John did not rejoice because Gaius is only firm in faith. The very context of writing the book was not the prosperity of his soul. The spiritual side of Gaius was already a given for John. The emphasis is on his hospitality related to his material possession. It can be inferred that this hospitality is the daughter of his spiritual maturity. The latter

would not be able to give birth if Gaius did not have material property. Gaius was rich and firm in faith. He therefore enjoyed an integral development in his personal life. John had wished him more progress in these two areas.

#### **6.2.2.3 Biblical example of integral prosperity to be emulated**

Several biblical people walked in complete prosperity i.e. they were rich but also firm in faith in God. If we imitate them, we can also do business, politics, gold mining, engage in any kind of entrepreneurship and remain holy, strong and living in faith while announcing the Good News.

##### **6.2.2.3.1 The people of the Old Testament and the *missio Dei***

In Romans 4:16-17 and Genesis 13:2, we read that Abraham, the father of faith, was also very rich economically. If we are legitimate children, we will keep faith and wealth. If we are unable to live like this, then we are bastards. "Like father, like son!" Moreover, if we consider ourselves children of God according to John 1:12, then we cannot fail to be economically rich because gold and silver belong to our Heavenly Father (Haggai 2:8).

God entrusted man with the management of his property. The people of the world are workers; we, as Christians, are heirs. Naturally, the property belongs more to the heir than to the worker. When Christians refuse to embark on the search for wealth, it is like children whose workers have fun with their father's fortunes while suffering from poverty. The prodigal son of Luke 15 illustrates this image well. If we consider the richest in the world, we will realize that Christians are less represented as well as Christian countries. It is sad, but it is a reality. The Church should show the world that these



things belong to her. Poverty is even an obstacle to the Christian faith. The second biblical character from the Old Testament that I will mention is Job. According to Job 1:1-3, Job was firm in his faith but also very rich. His history shows that neither his wealth nor the loss of his wealth could gain the upper hand over his faith.

#### **6.2.2.3.2 The people of the New Testament and *missio Dei***

In the New Testament Luke who was a Doctor is quoted, Missionary and Writer of the Bible. Joseph of Arimathea (Matthew 27:57-60) was also both a rich man and a disciple of the Lord Jesus. The last person mentioned is Lydia, a dealer of purple cloth (Acts 16:14). These people, although financially rich, were able to live their Christian faith to the fullest.

### **6.3 Fighting pessimism**

The above exegesis can help those who understood these passages as encouraging to separate faith and wealth, to see things differently. Assurance is given that they encourage us instead to integral development. People are very often pessimistic. They make only negative assumptions. Instead of imitating the heroes of life, those who fought the good fight and won, they worry about the failures of the losers of the fight of life. Those who become rich and abandon the faith, did not engage in politics, commerce, business, etc. with their faith. Simply put, it is because they were taught that the two do not work together. They merely dwelt on the spiritual alone for a long time. Then they realized that dry faith did not meet their material and financial needs. Since they learned that faith and wealth do not work together, they left

faith in the church before embarking on their adventure. It would be ideal for Christians to be prepared to manage both in their Christian walk. If people are prepared to combine the two together, it is convincing that it will work, and the local churches will have Christians who are rich and firm in their faith.

God is concerned for the integral development of man. He is the creator of everything, of faith but also of wealth. Nothing God created is to be rejected. He will judge us in the way we handled them. In creating man, God did want him to suffer. This is verified in the very process of creation. It is noticed in Genesis that God created everything first, prior to creating man in the last position. And it seems obvious to me that God did not create faith on top of the list. Wealth is necessary for man's earthly stay. Sin had negatively affected this creation, but Jesus came and restored everything. His final achievement will be in the New Jerusalem. God's recommendation to the Israelites in Deuteronomy 8:10-20, shows that God wants us to lead a balanced life. He wants us to have what is necessary for earthly life, but He also wants it to be accompanied by faith.

#### **6.4 Contribution and Conclusion**

The *missio Dei* concept is an important and essential notion in missiological reflection. The research into the relevance of the concept based on Wright's approach was the cornerstone of this study. According to Wright, the *missio Dei* is an initiative of God for the redemption of all that belongs to Him. This approach is opposed to any partial theology of mission for the benefit of unity in mission. The *missio Dei* therefore becomes the center of gravity. I think, these principles require the participation of all those involved in the promotion

of the Kingdom of God without any racial, religious, economic, or political discrimination.

This study revealed that the Church of Christ is carrying out its mandate outside the demands of *missio Dei*. All the actors of the mission are not involved, the needs of man are not considered in their integrality such as spiritually and physically, the Church has remained on the margins of the management of the rest of the creature. Ultimately, the gospel is not preached in its entirety due to doctrinal protection and liturgical perception. I think, in this sense, it is no longer Good News as recommended by Jesus Christ according to his mission. However, the Christian Church in Burkina Faso, seen through these discoveries, cannot avoid these weaknesses. The Church in Burkina Faso should rethink its theology of mission. This will eventually help to minimize effort while enhancing his performance in his participation in *missio Dei*.

Evidently, the researcher estimated that certain Catholic and Protestant theologians or missiologists have produced useful works on the concept *missio Dei*. Different approaches can be found according to each scholar and school of thought. Since the appearance of the concept in the Middle Ages, different scholars such as Catholic, Protestant, Pentecostal and Evangelical continue to discuss it to the present. I think that the concept *missio Dei* is an important missional tool for Christian mission as well as Christian Church in Burkina Faso. Because well understanding of mission Dei as God mission which express Jesus Christ mission could help Christian leaders and missionaries in their accomplishment of their mission without

complacency. I consider that nowadays, the concept *missio Dei* has a primordial place in the understanding of the Church mission in Burkina Faso.

Thus, the concept needs a deeper analysis for a dynamic Christian mission in the evangelical context. It has been observed that evangelical scholars are not actively engaged in the discussion around this crucial topic of missiology (Wiher 2014:12). For this reason, I think that the debate on this concept can remain open. In conclusion, I point out the theological implications of Wright's thought for evangelical Christian mission in Burkina Faso and contribute with original research to the development of Missiology as a discipline and specifically, to promote and redynamize the concept mission Dei in sub-Saharan Africa. Then, the thesis underlines the necessity of contextualisation of Christian mission and missional theories for the achievement of Christian mission everywhere.

Evidently, this study is a great contribution for the life of the church in Burkina Faso on several aspects: it first awakens the attention of the church that it has marginalized certain social layers in the participation of the church in the mission. Then, it corrects the traditional conception of the mission of God. Instead of looking only at the spiritual dimension of individual Christians, this study shows that the individual in the body of Christ must lead a balanced earthly life. Thus, this study will also stimulate the theological world to embark on reflection on the missiological significance of *missio Dei*. Finally, this study is praxis and theoretical. It will allow the church in Burkina Faso to review its administrative management. Finally, this study showed that the concept of integral mission has become essential in the life of the church. Whoever speaks of *missio Dei* necessarily speaks of integral mission. This

study has also helped to explain some fundamental passages which in the past have led to the fragmentation of the mission of God. The church in Burkina Faso can serve as Christ recommended through his ministry.

In addition, the thesis leaves room for students and researchers, in the theological field as well as in connected disciplines to find practical and biblical methods that can help the church to regain its place of light of the world and salt of the earth. So, the reflection will continue through further research.

### **6.5 Further Research**

For the further research, the researcher suggests a deep research on the role of the Christian leaders regarding missional work through different cultural context.

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